



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Financial Sector Benchmarking System

# Regional Benchmarking Report

October 2011



## About the Financial Sector Benchmarking System

This Regional Benchmarking Report is part of a series of benchmarking reports about financial sector challenges and USAID programming needs in the twelve countries in Southeast Europe and Eurasia that are beneficiaries of USAID's Partners for Financial Stability ("PFS") program. Interested persons can access this report, other financial sector benchmarking reports, a benchmarking methodology paper, and an interactive tool for generating customized reports from the benchmarking database at <http://www.pfsprogram.org/fsbs-database>.

In this updated version of the June 2011 Regional Benchmarking Report, new data for 2010 and early 2011 have been incorporated. The subject countries' financial sectors are compared and contrasted against other emerging European countries and against a 'global benchmark' which is taken from one of these sources depending upon data availability and other considerations: the Eurozone countries' average; Korea (as a proxy for advanced developing countries); or a best-practices standard selected by PFS.

All of the data referenced in this document was obtained from public sources and the opinions expressed herein are based upon analysis by PFS.

CEE Northern Tier	CEE Southern Tier	Eurasia
Czech Republic	Albania	Armenia
Estonia	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Azerbaijan
Hungary	Bulgaria	Belarus
Latvia	Croatia	Georgia
Lithuania	FYR Macedonia	Kazakhstan
Poland	Kosovo	Kyrgyz Republic
Slovakia	Montenegro	Moldova
Slovenia	Romania	Russia
	Serbia	Tajikistan
		Turkmenistan
		Ukraine
		Uzbekistan

## About PFS

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Partners for Financial Stability (PFS) Program is led by the Office of Economic Growth in the Europe and Eurasia Bureau (E&E). The project addresses the challenges facing the financial sector in 12 Partner Countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (Southeastern Europe) as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine (Eurasia). Other countries in the E&E region that are considered USAID 'graduates' serve as Mentor Countries in the PFS Program.

The PFS Program is designed to complement the work of the bilateral USAID missions' Economic Growth programs in the region by bringing together regional players to address regional challenges. PFS Program activities include benchmarking studies, conferences, knowledge sharing, research and technical assistance. The PFS Program addresses the challenges of the financial systems in these regions, working in a broad range of subject areas including anti-money laundering, banking and non-bank financial regulation, supervision and institutional rehabilitation, corporate governance, financial literacy, access to finance and implementation of international standards in financial sector reporting.

## Contents

1.	Update to Financial Sector Benchmarking Analysis dated June 2011 .....	4
1.1.	Macroeconomic and Financial Sector Stability.....	4
1.2.	Financial Sector Size.....	5
1.3.	Financial Sector Sophistication .....	5
1.4.	Access to Financial Services.....	5
1.5.	Enabling Environment for Financial Services.....	6
2.	Financial Sector Benchmarking System Rankings – Overall.....	7
3.	Financial Sector Benchmarking Indicators .....	14
3.1.	Macroeconomic and Financial Sector Stability.....	14
3.1.1.	Macro Stability Benchmarking Indicators.....	14
3.1.2.	Other Macro Stability Indicators .....	17
3.1.3.	Financial Sector Stability Benchmarking Indicators.....	20
3.1.4.	Other Financial Sector Stability Indicators.....	25
3.2.	Financial Sector Size.....	26
3.2.1.	Financial Sector Size Benchmarking Indicators.....	26
3.3.	Sophistication of Financial Services .....	29
3.3.1.	Financial Sector Sophistication Benchmarking Indicators .....	29
3.3.2.	Other Financial Sector Sophistication Indicators .....	32
3.4.	Access to Financial Services.....	34
3.4.1.	Access Benchmarking Indicators.....	34
3.4.2.	Other Access Indicators .....	36
4.	Financial Sector Enabling Environment .....	39
4.1.1.	Enabling Environment Benchmarking Indicators .....	39
4.1.2.	Other Enabling Environment Indicators .....	43
	Sources .....	47

# 1. Update to Financial Sector Benchmarking Analysis dated June 2011

## 1.1. Macroeconomic and Financial Sector Stability

Indicators of macroeconomic stability deteriorated slightly in Southeast Europe (SEE) and Eurasia in 2010, while the most worrisome financial sector data show that banks in most countries are burdened by alarming levels of non-performing loans. The financial sectors continue to be vulnerable to external developments, particularly slowing EU growth and troubles with Eurozone banks.

On the macroeconomic side, most countries are still import-oriented, debts are climbing, and inflation is well above developed-country norms. Current account deficits remain unsustainably high in many countries, particularly the Southeast Europe (SEE) countries. These deficits declined in some countries but increased in others. Gross indebtedness levels increased modestly after growing rapidly in the face of fiscal stimulus packages in 2009 and are at high levels in most PFS Beneficiary countries, with the notable exceptions of Azerbaijan and Albania. Inflation rates declined in most countries but are still high, especially in Eurasia. In both SEE and Eurasia, the governments' gross reserves remain well below global benchmarks, and foreign direct investment is down. Most of the countries are running fiscal deficits, but these began to decline in 2010 as growth picked up and expenditures were cut. High structural unemployment and low per capita incomes are long term challenges.

Despite these challenges, the economies of the region grew in 2010 and the IMF is forecasting fairly high levels of economic growth for most PFS Beneficiary countries in 2011. **General market risks that can derail these forecasts include a fall-off in export earnings to the Eurozone and other non-EU member countries with which the PFS Beneficiary countries trade<sup>1</sup>, combined with declining remittance flows, tourism receipts and direct investment as a result of tightened economic conditions in the Eurozone.** An additional point of stress for the PFS Beneficiary countries under such circumstances is the potential return of workers from Europe (and elsewhere, such as Russia) at a time when jobs are not readily available in the SEE or Eurasia regions. Particularly in the SEE region where structural unemployment rates are frequently above 20 percent, this is a significant challenge unless real GDP growth accelerates.

**The countries' financial sectors became increasingly vulnerable to contagion from the Eurozone, while problem loans reached systemically worrying levels and (in most countries) exposure to foreign currency-induced credit risk increased. In several SEE countries, Eurozone banks own or control over 90 percent of the banking sector.** NPLs in at least seven of the 12 PFS Beneficiary countries exceeded 10 percent in 2011, and most countries showed worsening trends. All of the countries except (Montenegro and Kosovo, which have adopted the euro) are exposed to the risk of yet worse loan quality problems as a result of their high levels of foreign currency-denominated loans.

**Loan-to-deposit ratios show that banks in the SEE region are relatively liquid, whereas many banks in Eurasia are reliant on potentially volatile nondeposit funding. Bank earnings also remain weak, in general.** In the case of SEE Beneficiary countries, 2010 bank earnings were close to zero. The most recently reported 2011 earnings

---

<sup>1</sup> See Regional Economic Outlook--Europe, IMF, October 2011, p. 87 for an index of trade inter-connectedness with the Eurozone and other parts of Europe. (Does not include the Caucasus.)

were strong in four countries with ratios above 1 percent<sup>2</sup>, while most other PFS Beneficiary countries show positive albeit weaker earnings and some are showing losses.

**Despite the rising NPLs, credit grew modestly in SEE and more robustly in Eurasia in 2010 based on an influx of deposits, supporting restored GDP growth.** This trend may reverse if contagion from the Eurozone brings about a new series of credit crunches throughout the region--choking off economic growth.

The banking sector maintained reasonably strong levels of capital and provisioning ratios for non-performing loans in 2010 in both regions. Banks' provisions for NPLs are high or balanced in most countries, but may be insufficient in at least four countries<sup>3</sup>.

**Deposit growth picked up substantially in 2010 in both regions, and explains most of the funding for incremental credit to the economy.** The growth in deposits reflects improved confidence in the safety and soundness of the banks which have been reinforced by deposit insurance reform during or after the 2008 crisis. However, a significant portion of deposits is still held in foreign currency, well above global benchmarks (e.g., Eurozone, Korea). Deposit growth far exceeded growth in the Eurozone. Because of vulnerability to pressures in the Eurozone, there is a risk that deposit growth in several of the PFS Beneficiary countries will slow or even that deposits will contract in 2011.

## 1.2. Financial Sector Size

**The financial sectors in both regions remain small by global benchmark measures, with slight improvement but no material changes in these ratios in 2010.** Despite recent deposit growth, the ratio of bank deposits as a percentage of GDP in PFS Beneficiary countries is only a little more than half of the comparable measure in the Eurozone, while in Eurasia they are only about 30 percent of the benchmark. Bank credit to GDP in PFS Beneficiary countries is less than 40 percent of comparable benchmark levels, whereas in Eurasia it is less than 30 percent. Bank capital to GDP is generally about two thirds Eurozone measures. Insurance premium and stock market capitalization measures indicate significant development gaps when compared with global benchmarks.

## 1.3. Financial Sector Sophistication

**As with financial sector size, financial sector sophistication in the PFS Beneficiary countries continues to lag global benchmarks, although there are signs of some incremental improvement.** Stock and bond market liquidity (trading volume) remain extremely low, while stock market capitalization figures are volatile and well below figures in advanced markets. Insurance markets remain small and underdeveloped, particularly life insurance. In 2010, the non-life insurance premium revenues declined in both regions. While credit cards are not prevalent, there is evidence of payment cards being used increasingly in PFS Beneficiary country markets. Ratios of debit card holders are now nearly 40 percent of Eurozone benchmarks, although the number of debit card transactions per capita is much less (closer to 15 percent). Credit card measures are much lower.

## 1.4. Access to Financial Services

**Access to financial services continues to significantly lag global (Eurozone) benchmarks, although a number of ratios showed improvement in both regions.** Real interest rate spreads were higher than the Eurozone in 2010,

---

<sup>2</sup> Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Serbia.

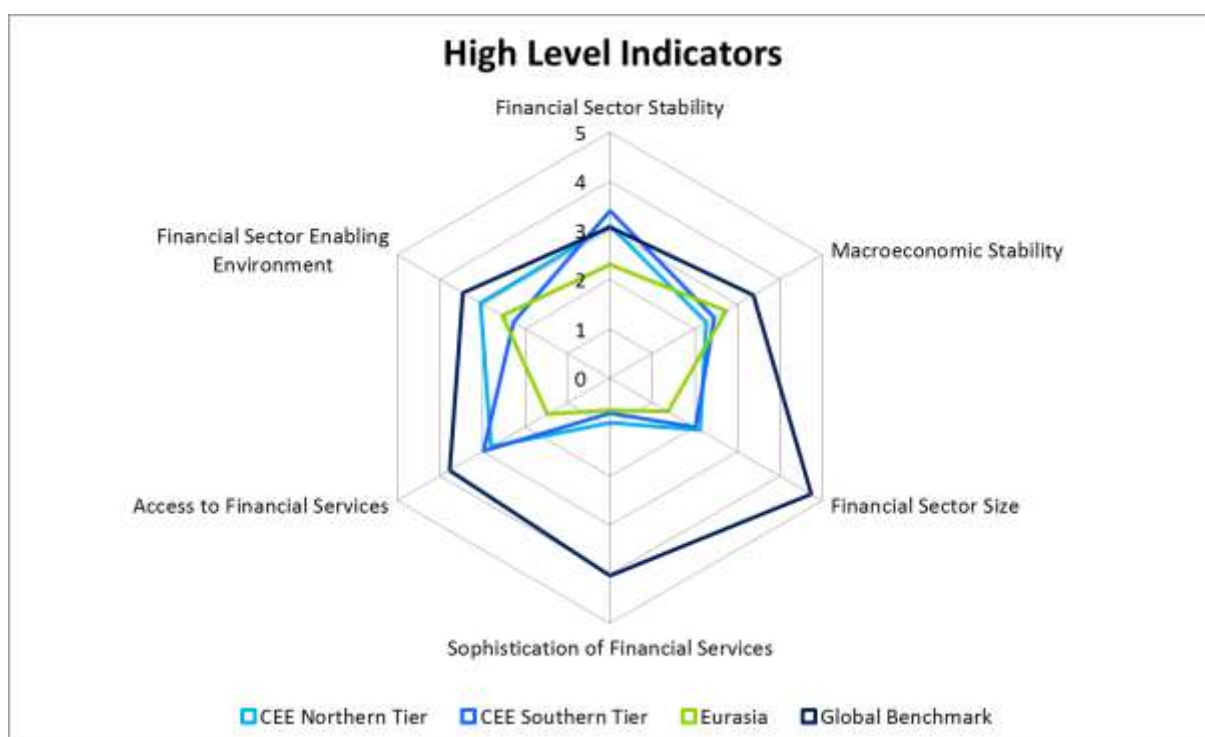
<sup>3</sup> Armenia, Bosnia, Moldova and Montenegro.

reflecting higher borrowing costs for businesses and individuals, although this may also reflect a reasonable risk premium under the circumstances. The number of bank branches and ATMs per capita declined slightly in many of the countries, reducing access for some.

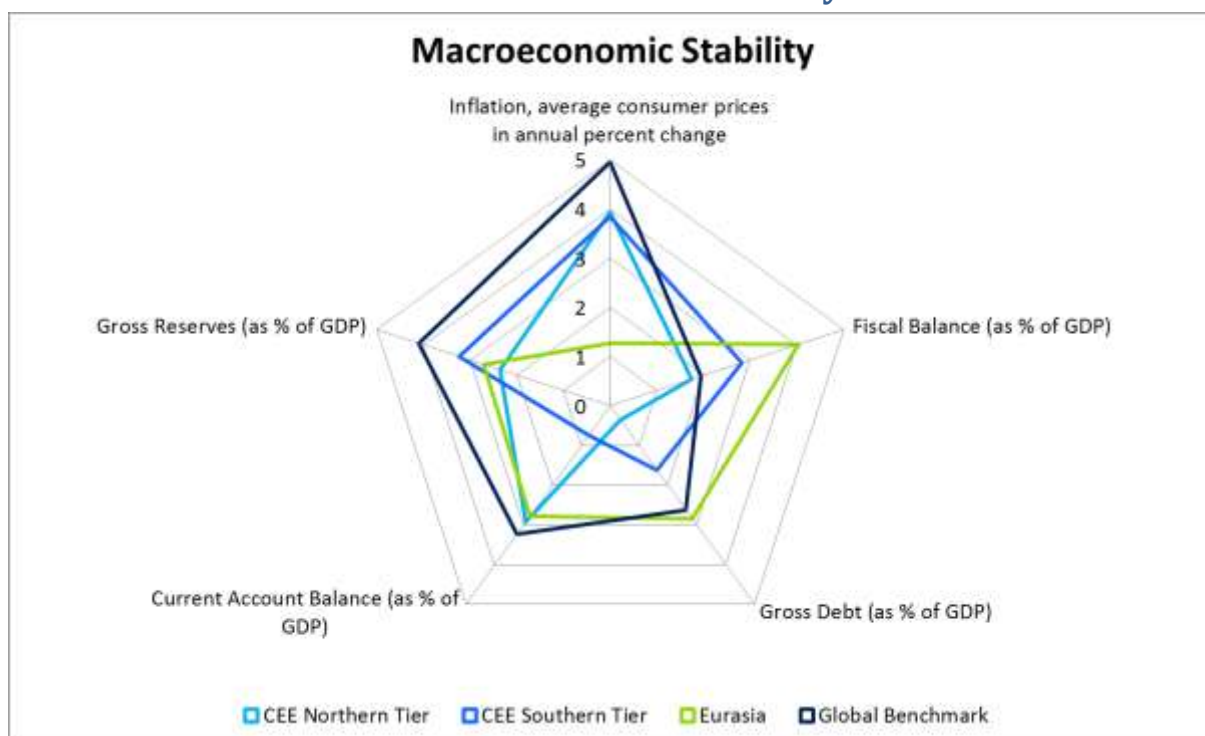
## **1.5. Enabling Environment for Financial Services**

**The enabling environment for financial services continues to improve in the PFS Beneficiary countries, although important lingering weaknesses undermine investment and economic growth.** On the positive side, both regions have made significant improvements in property registration time requirements in recent years, albeit with some backsliding in Eurasia in 2010. Credit information bureau coverage continues to improve, with the SEE region in particular approaching Eurozone levels. On the negative side, contract enforcement remains comparatively costly in both regions, and most governance (corruption) indicators show very weak scores when compared with the Eurozone.

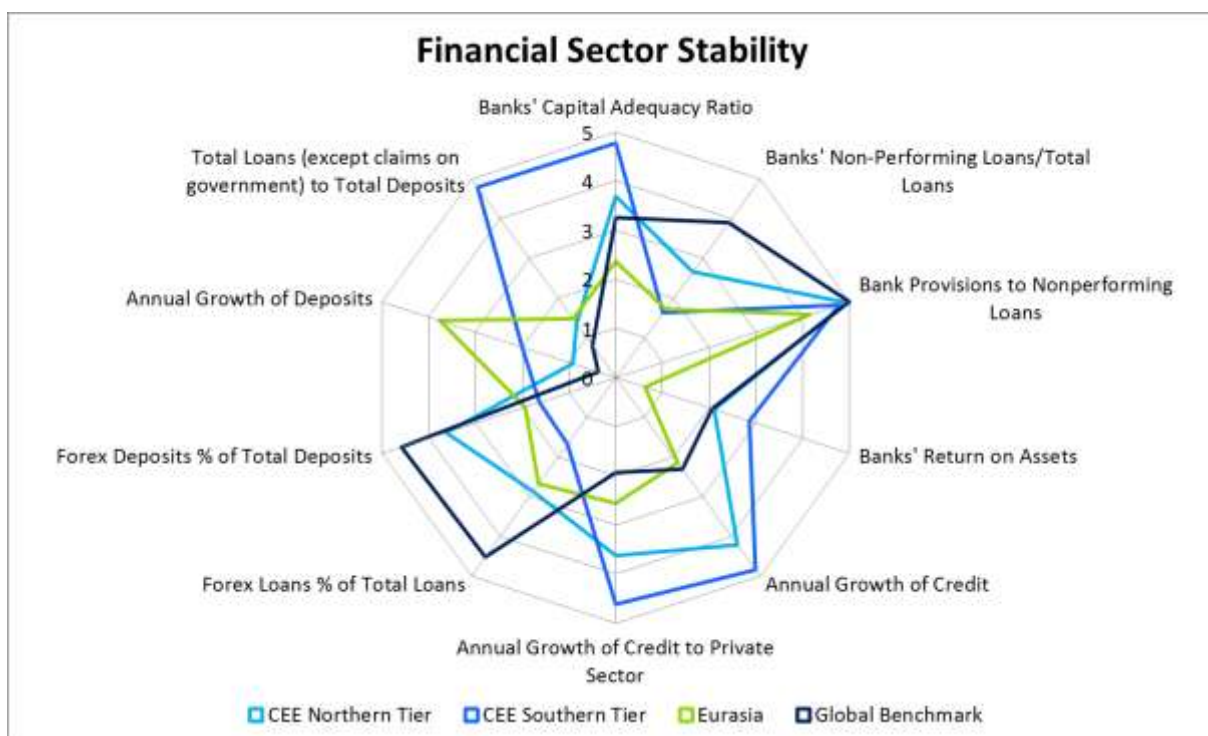
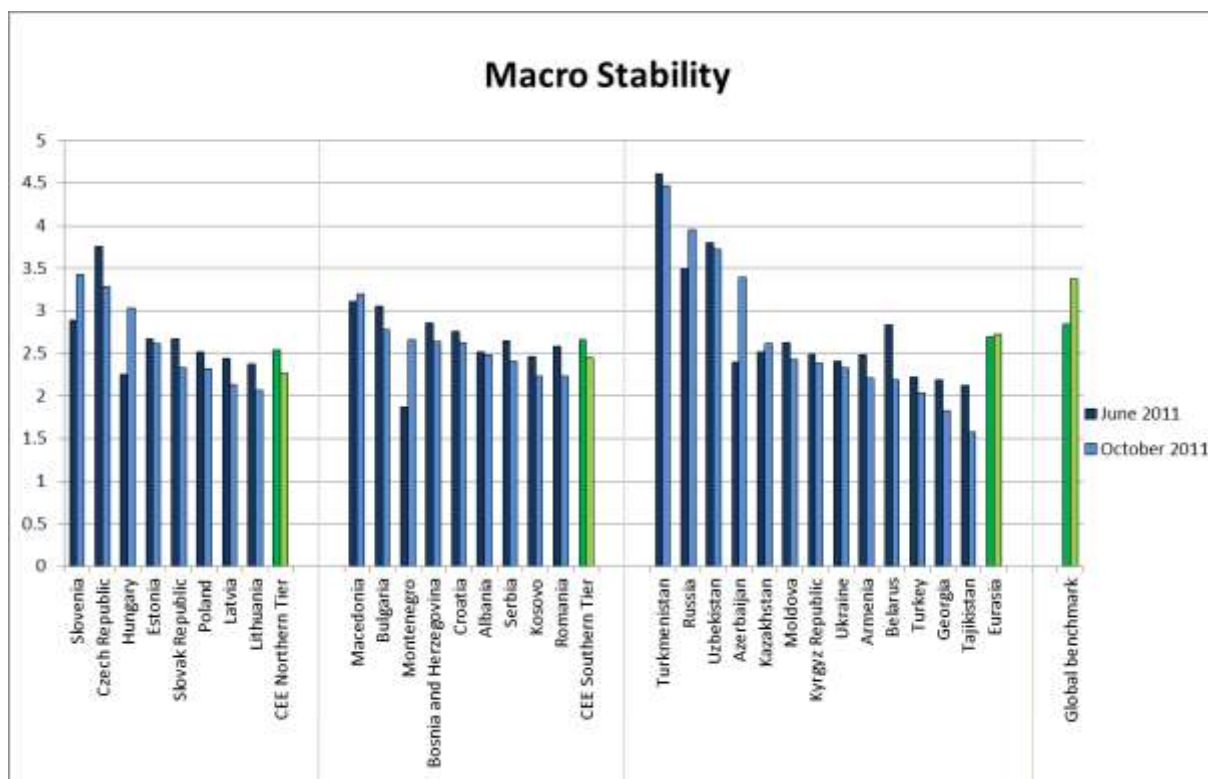
## 2. Financial Sector Benchmarking System Rankings – Overall



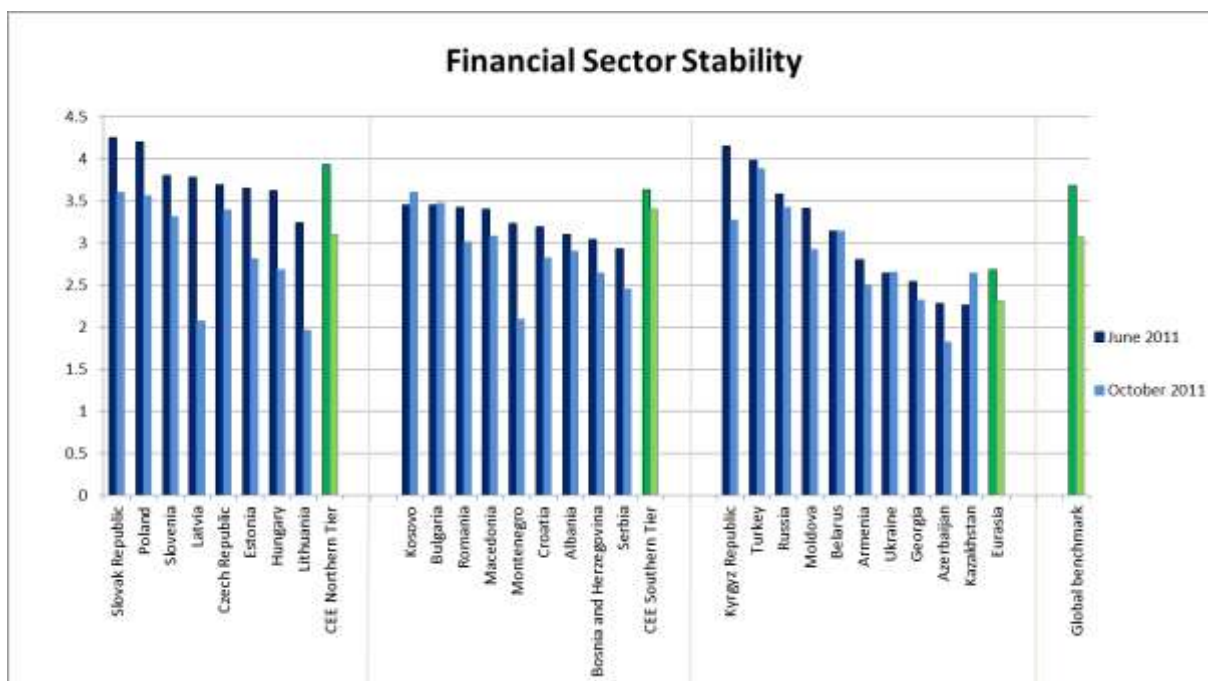
### 2.1. Macroeconomic and Financial Sector Stability



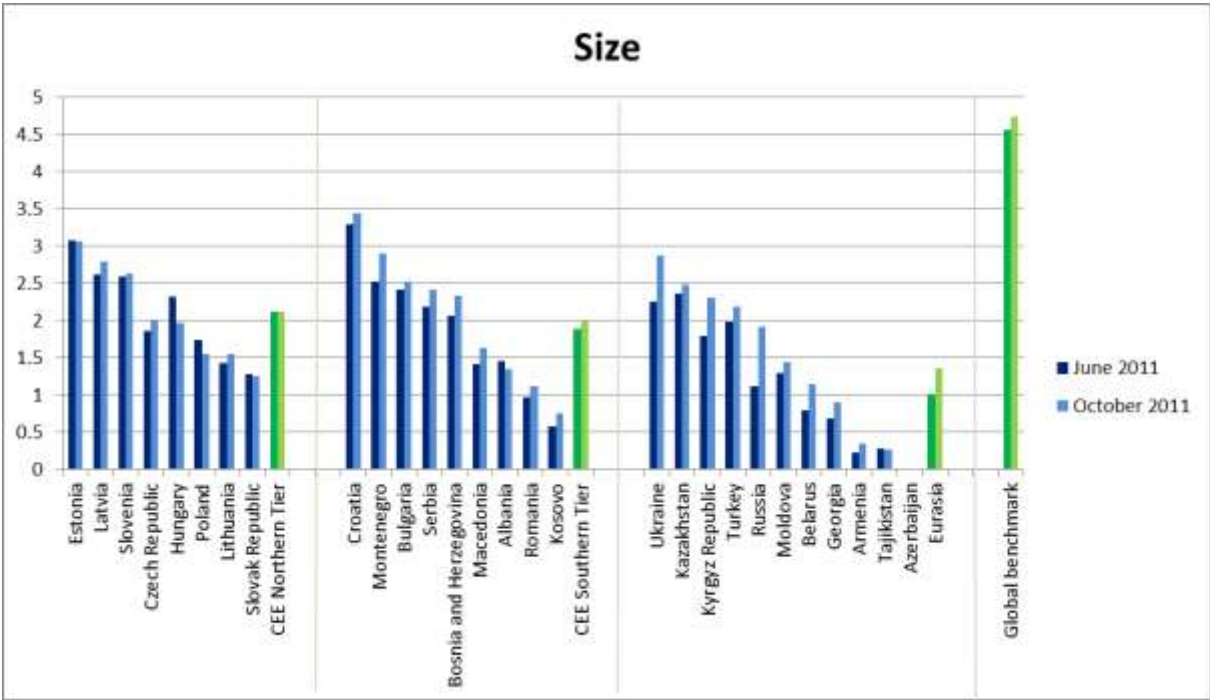
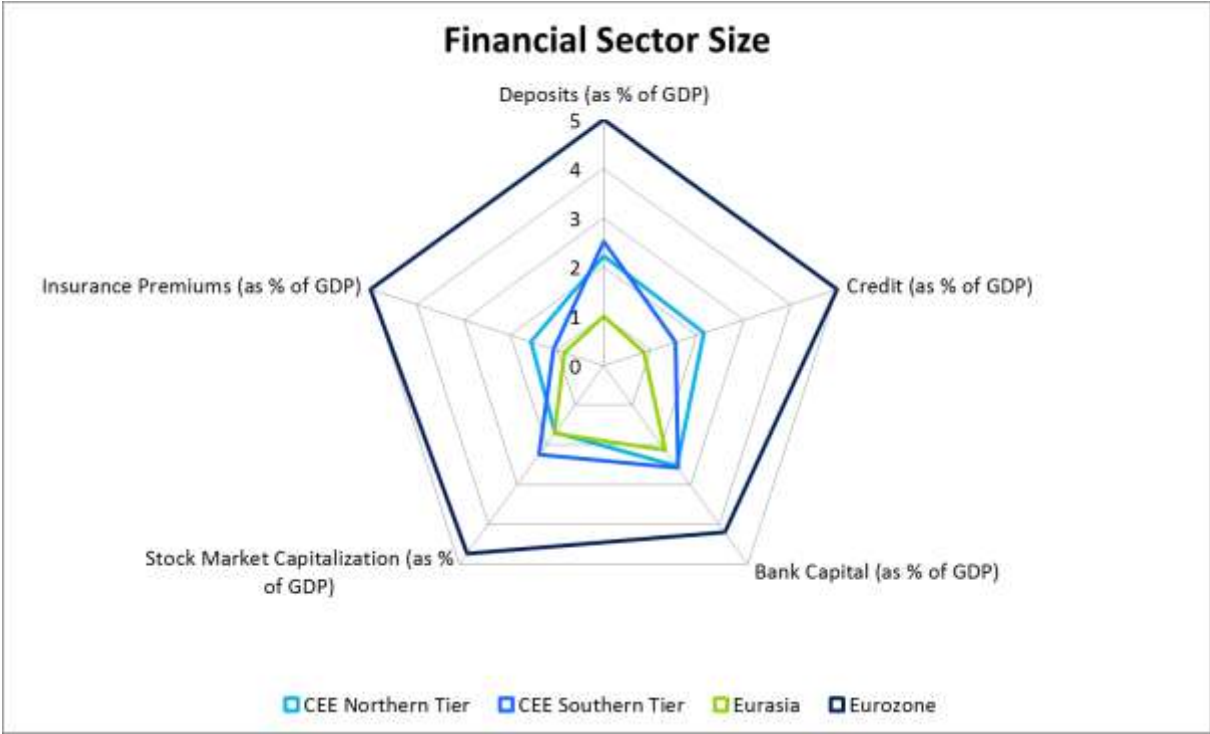




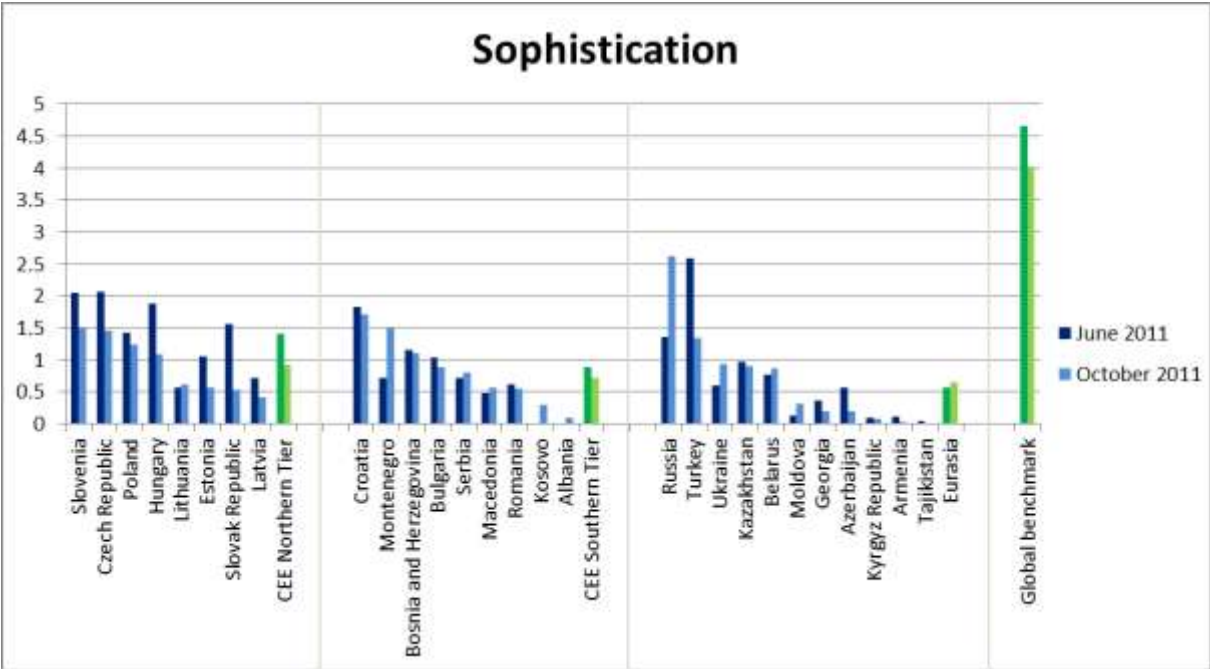
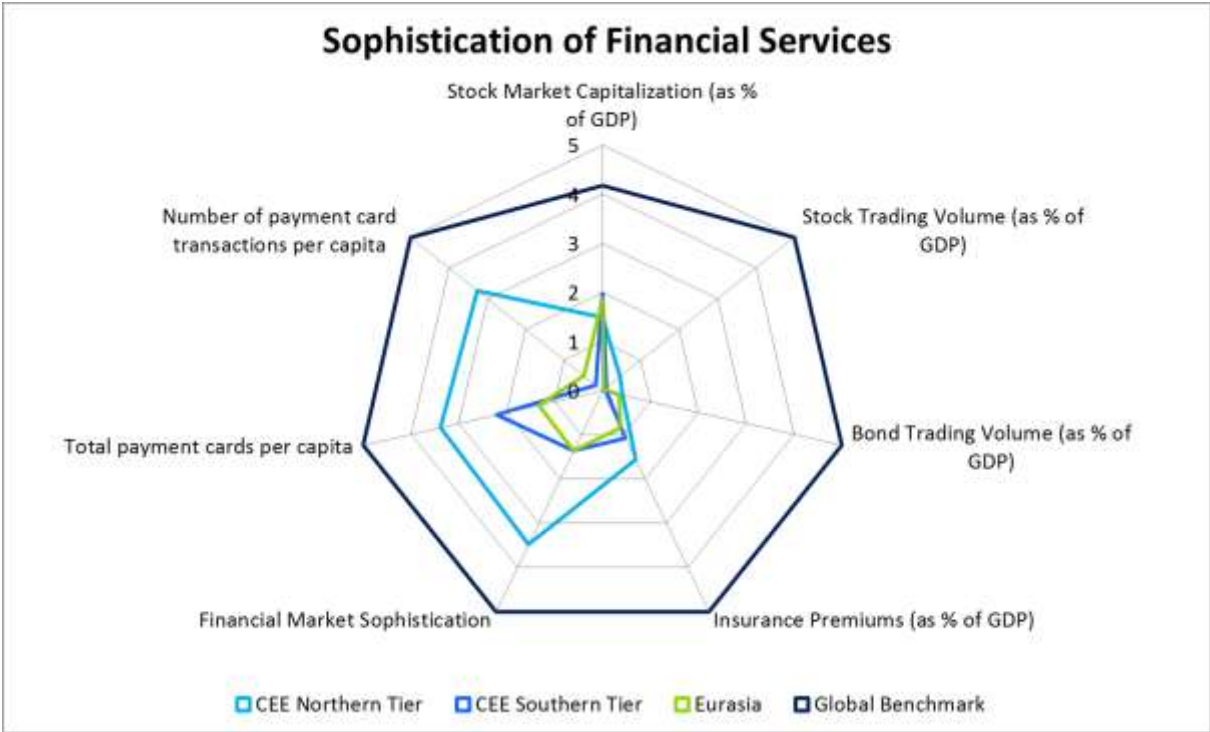




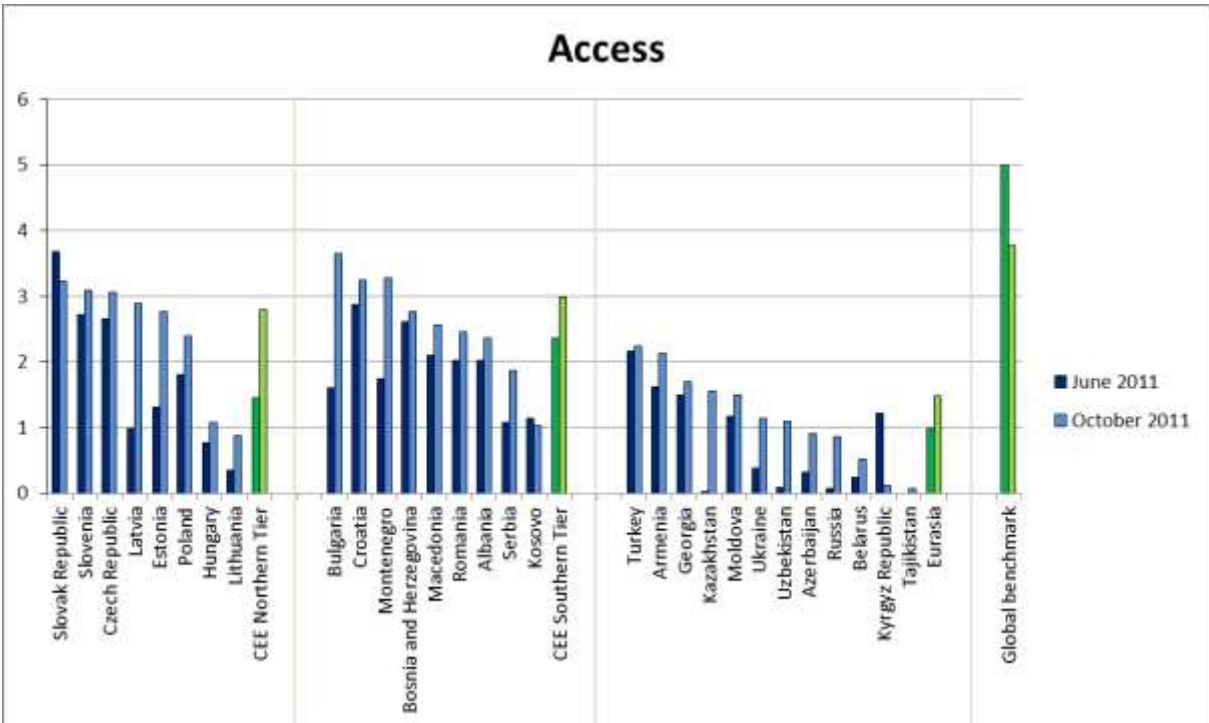
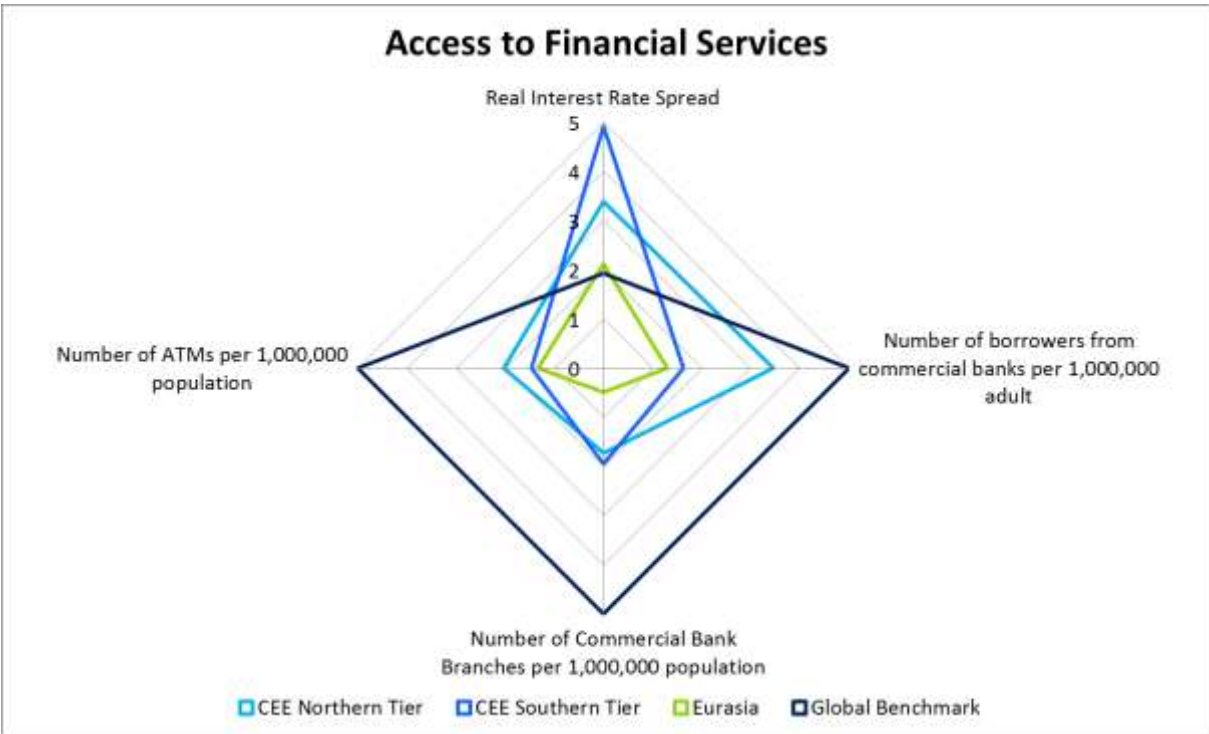
## 2.2. Financial Sector Size



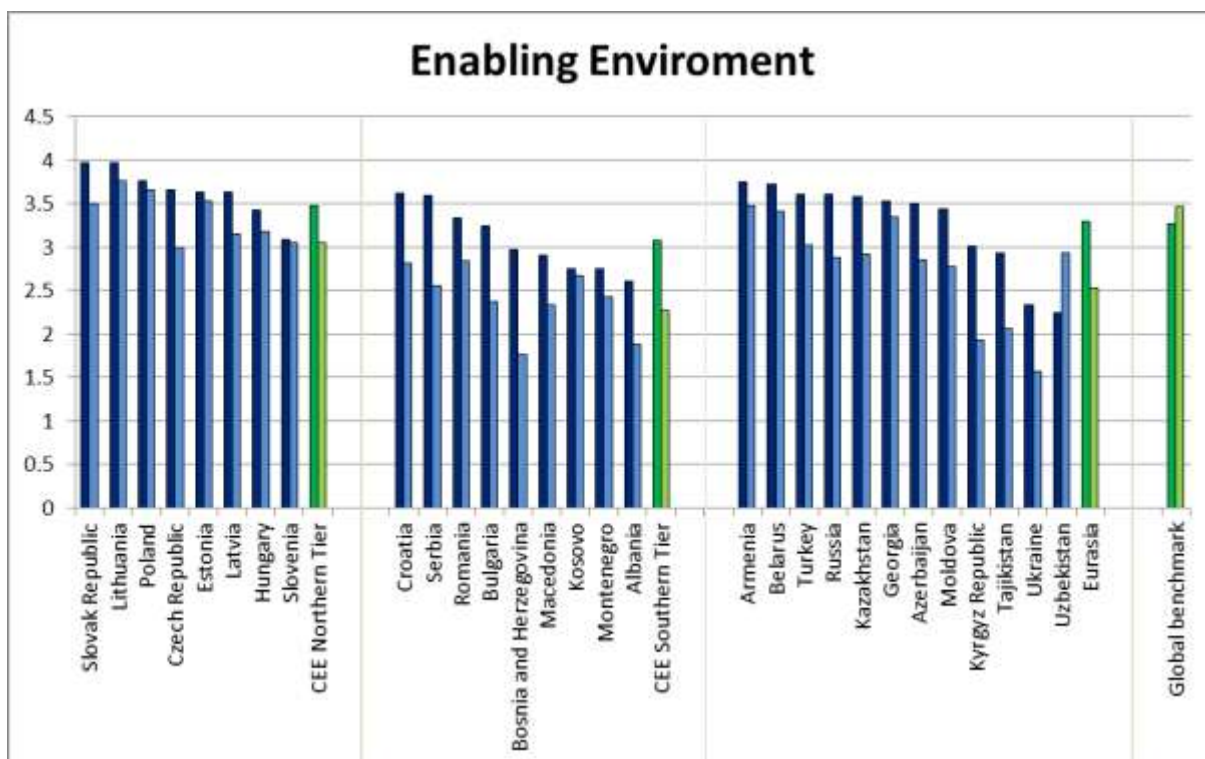
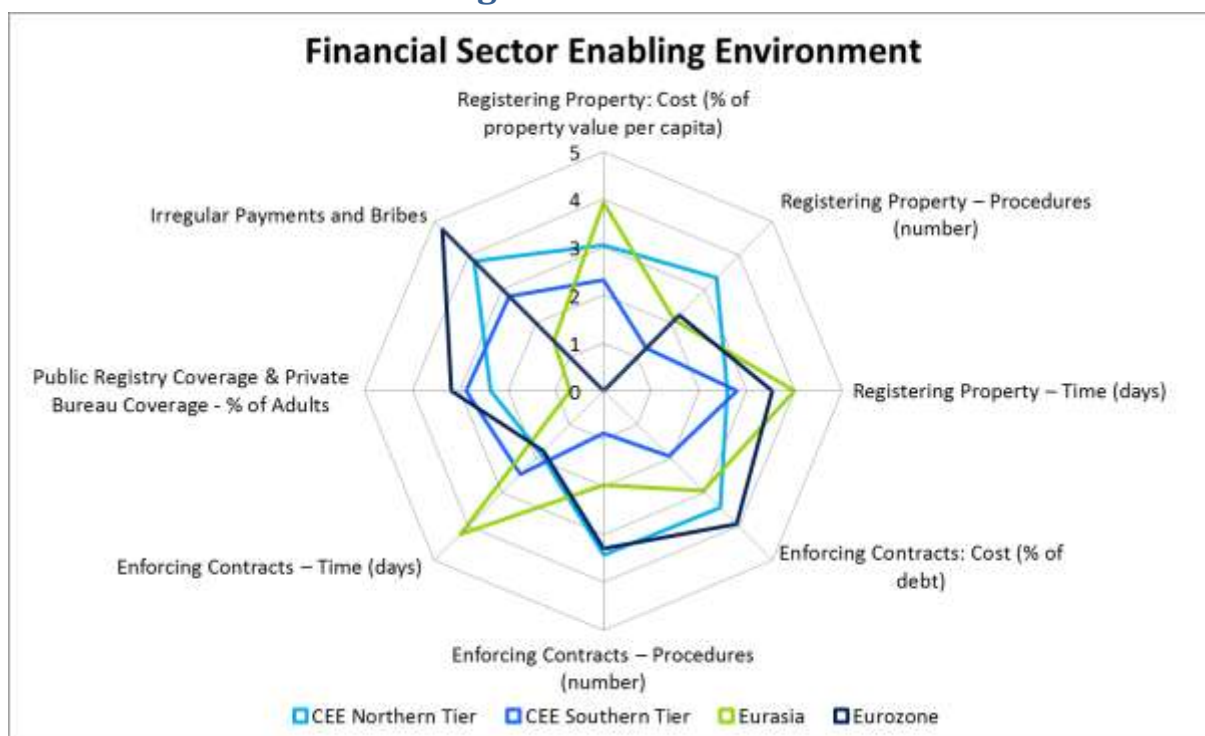
### 2.3. Financial Sector Sophistication



## 2.4. Access to Financial Services



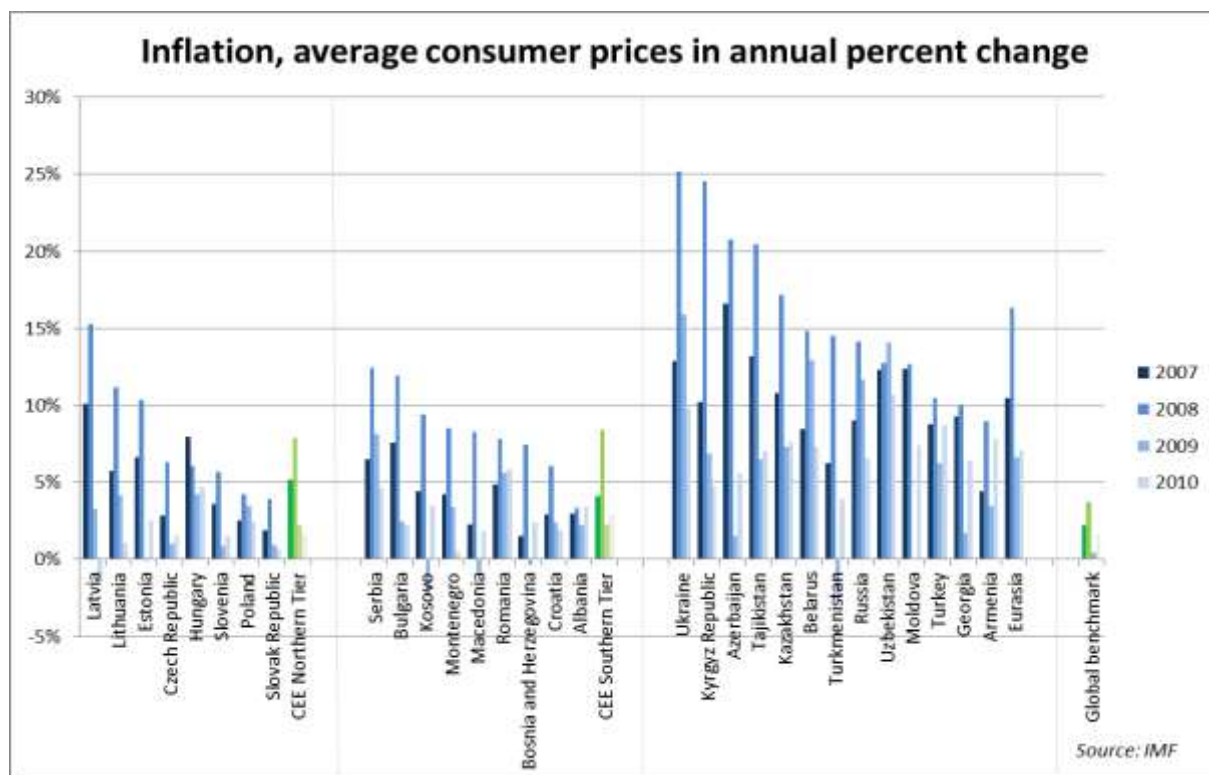
## 2.5. Financial Sector Enabling Environment



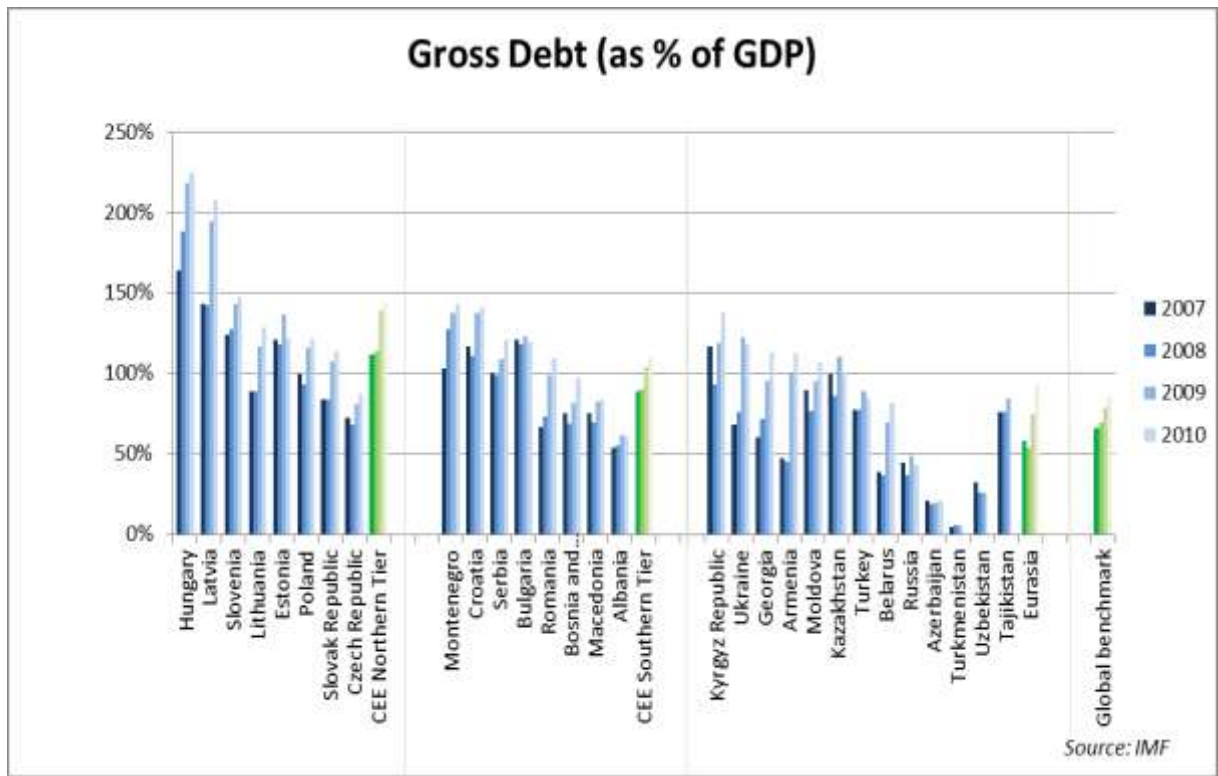
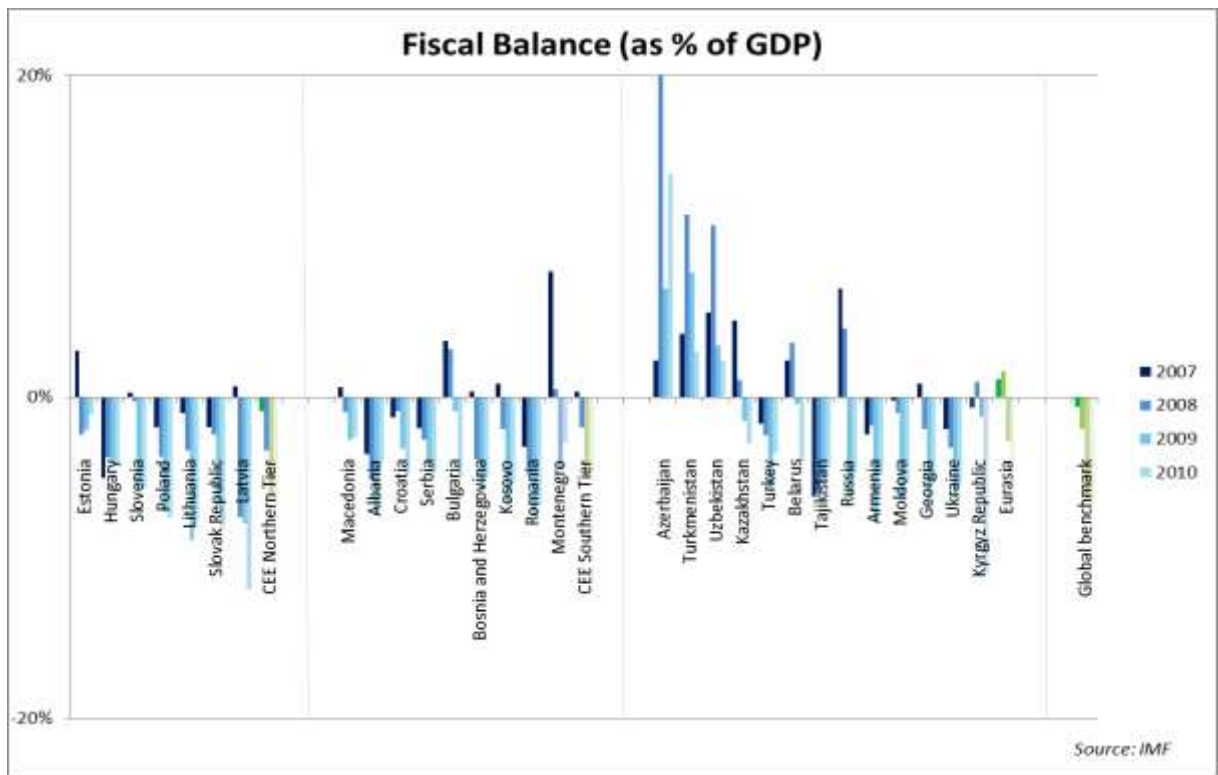
### 3. Financial Sector Benchmarking Indicators

#### 3.1. Macroeconomic and Financial Sector Stability

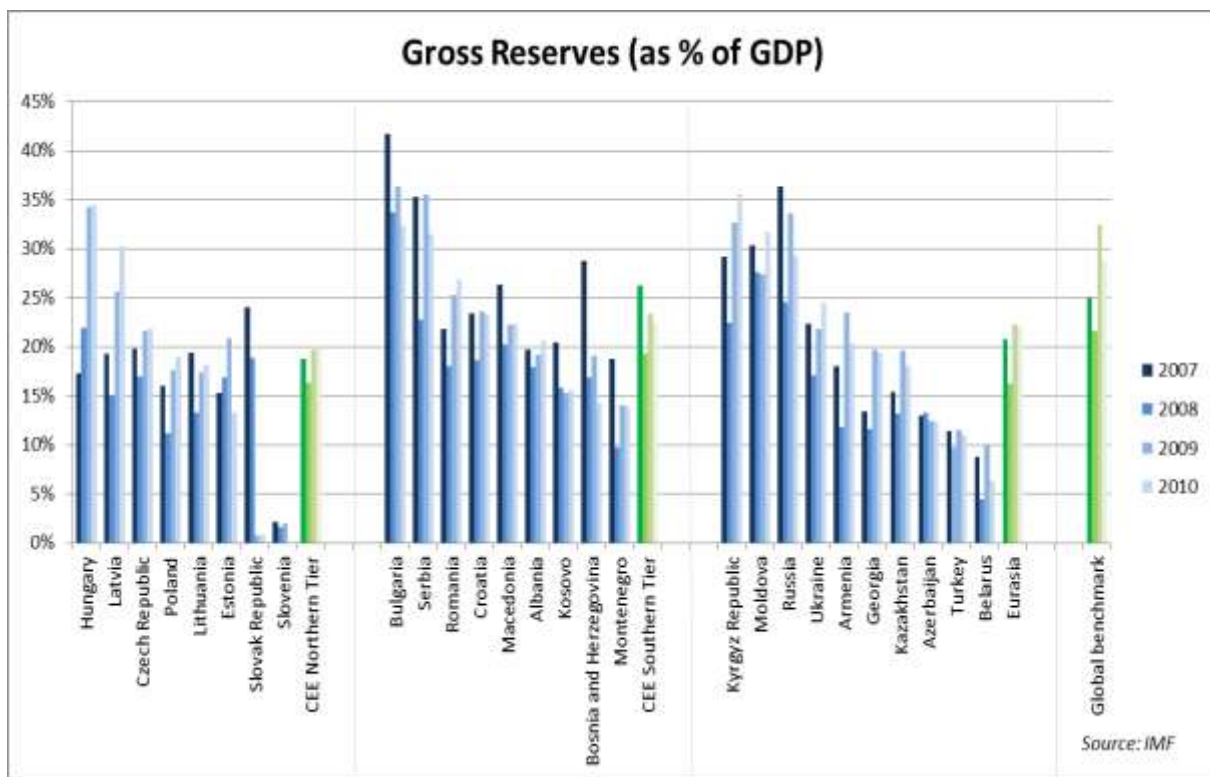
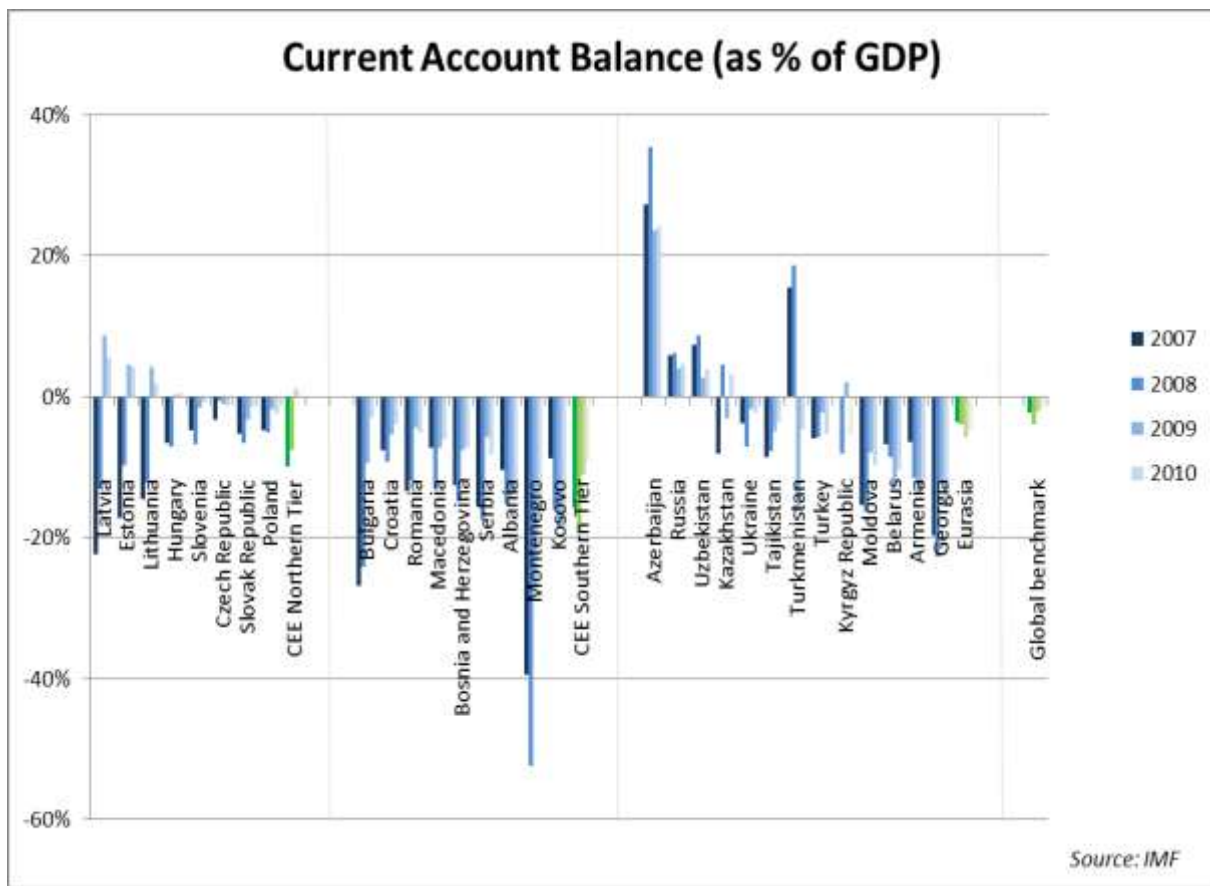
##### 3.1.1. Macro Stability Benchmarking Indicators



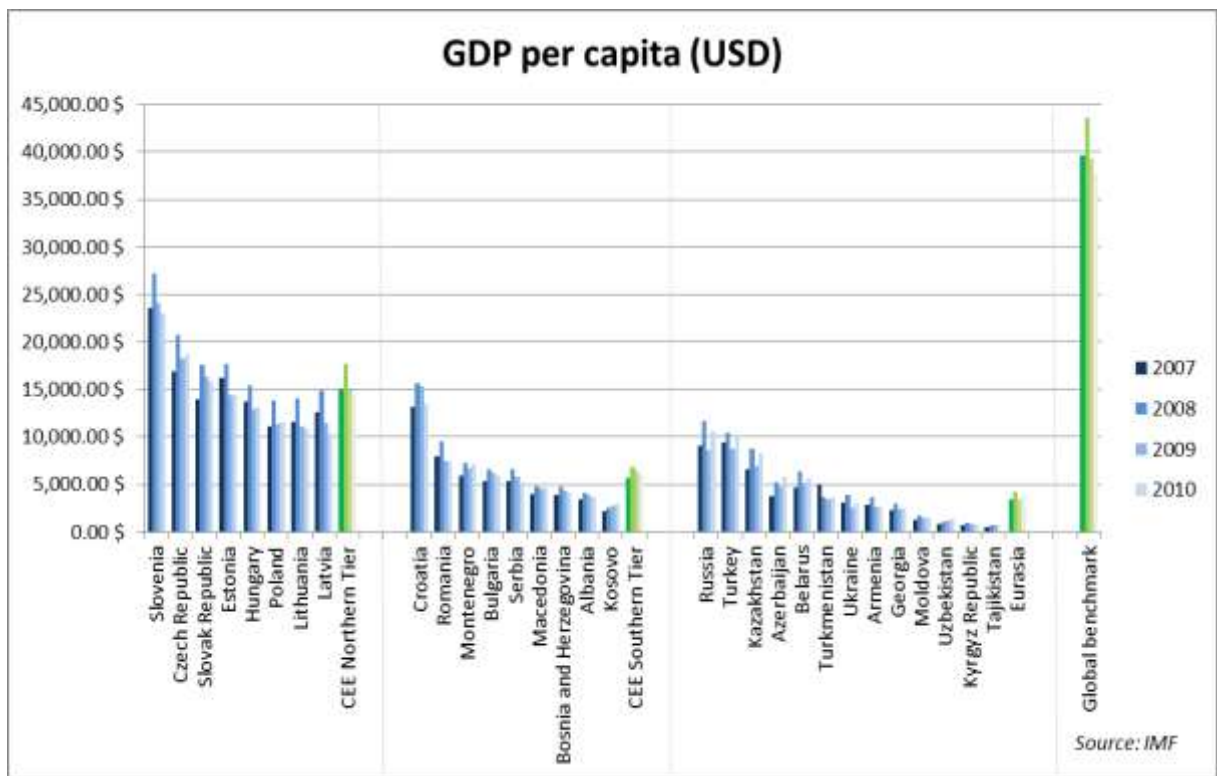
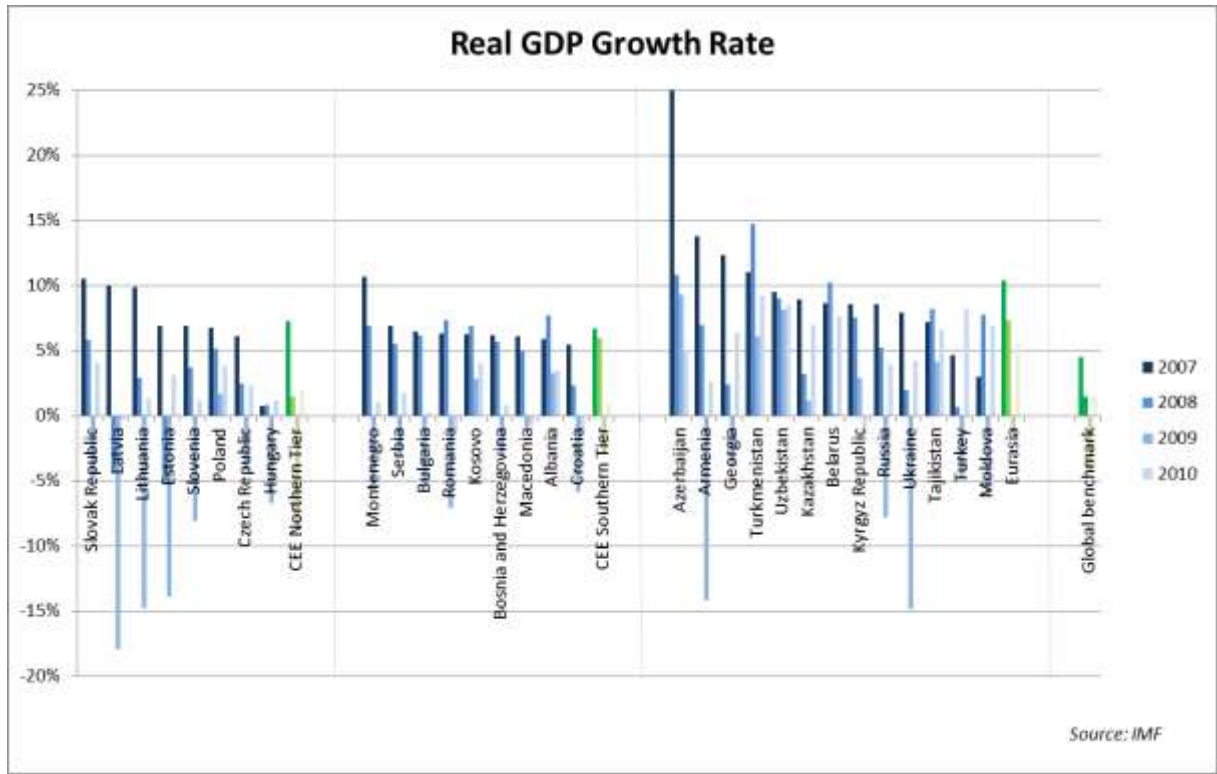


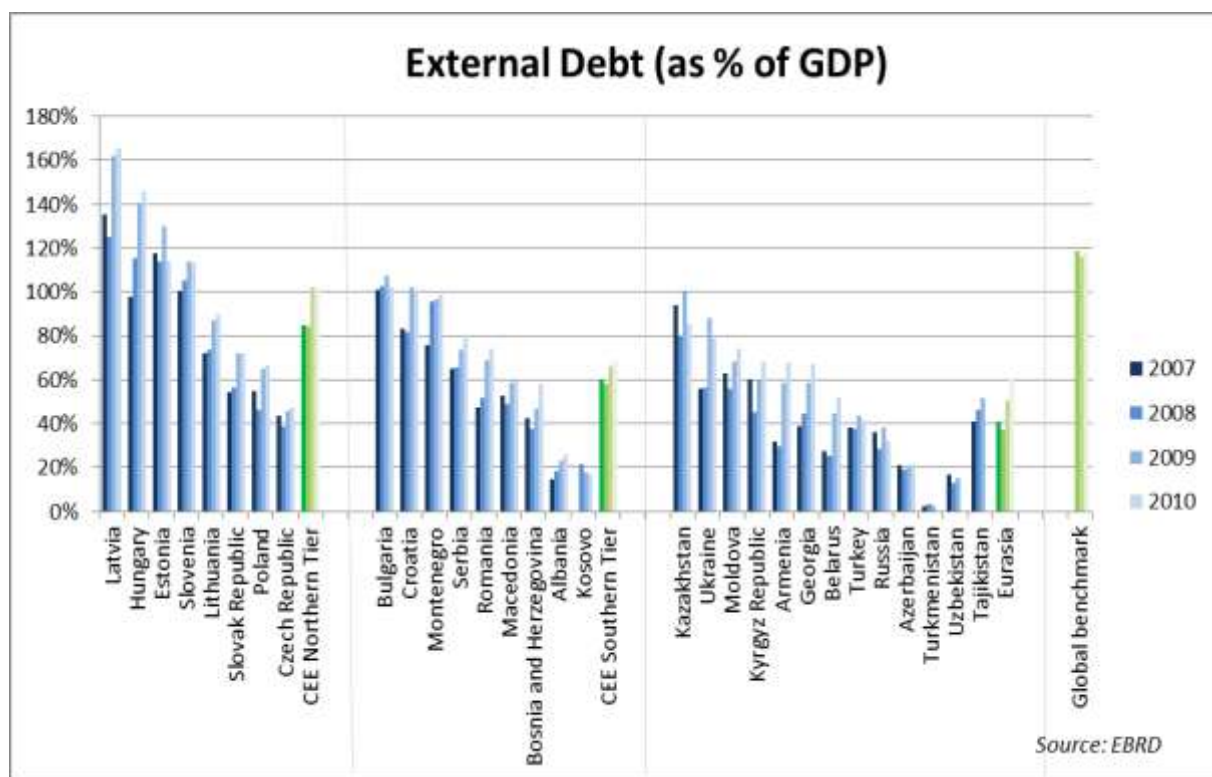
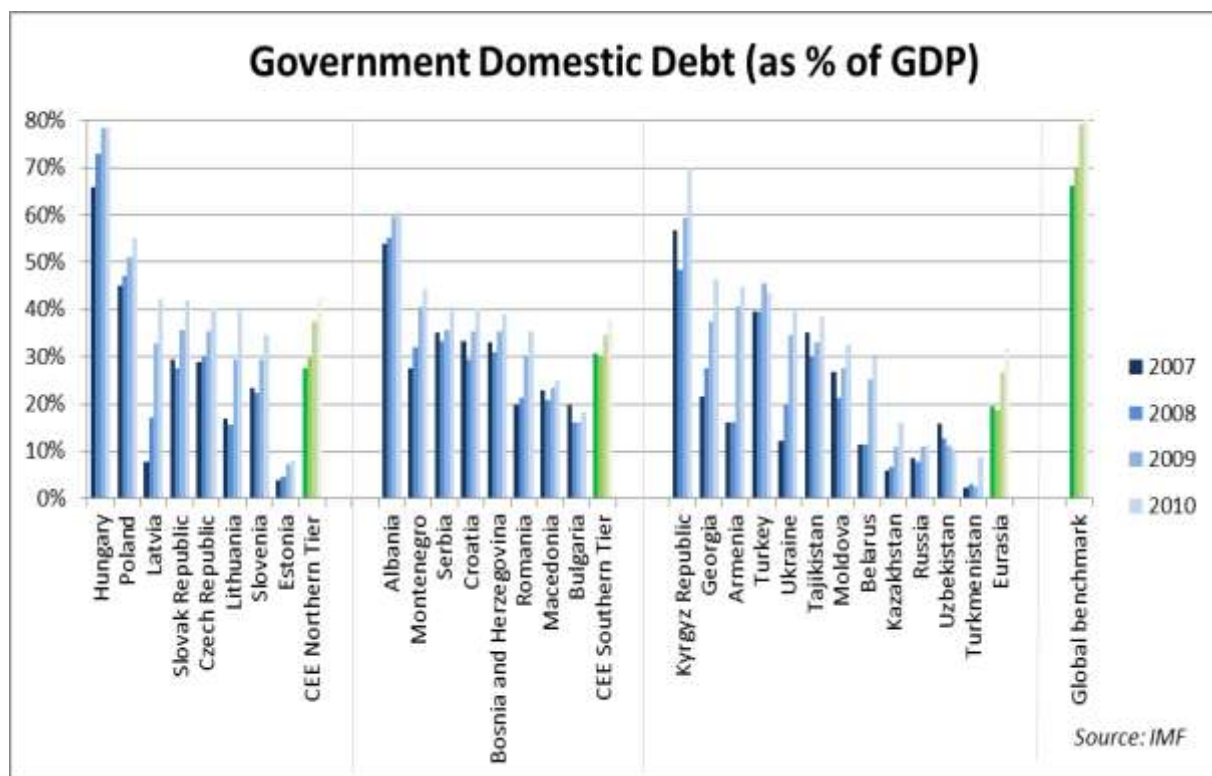


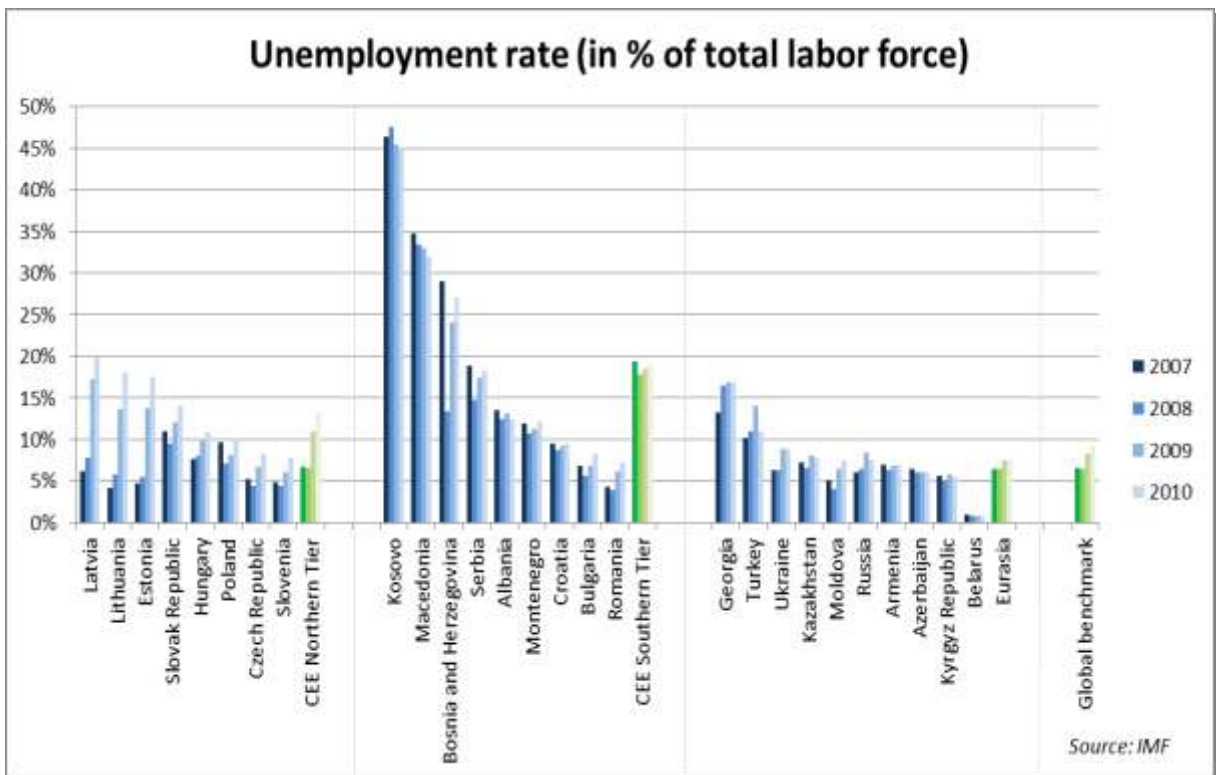
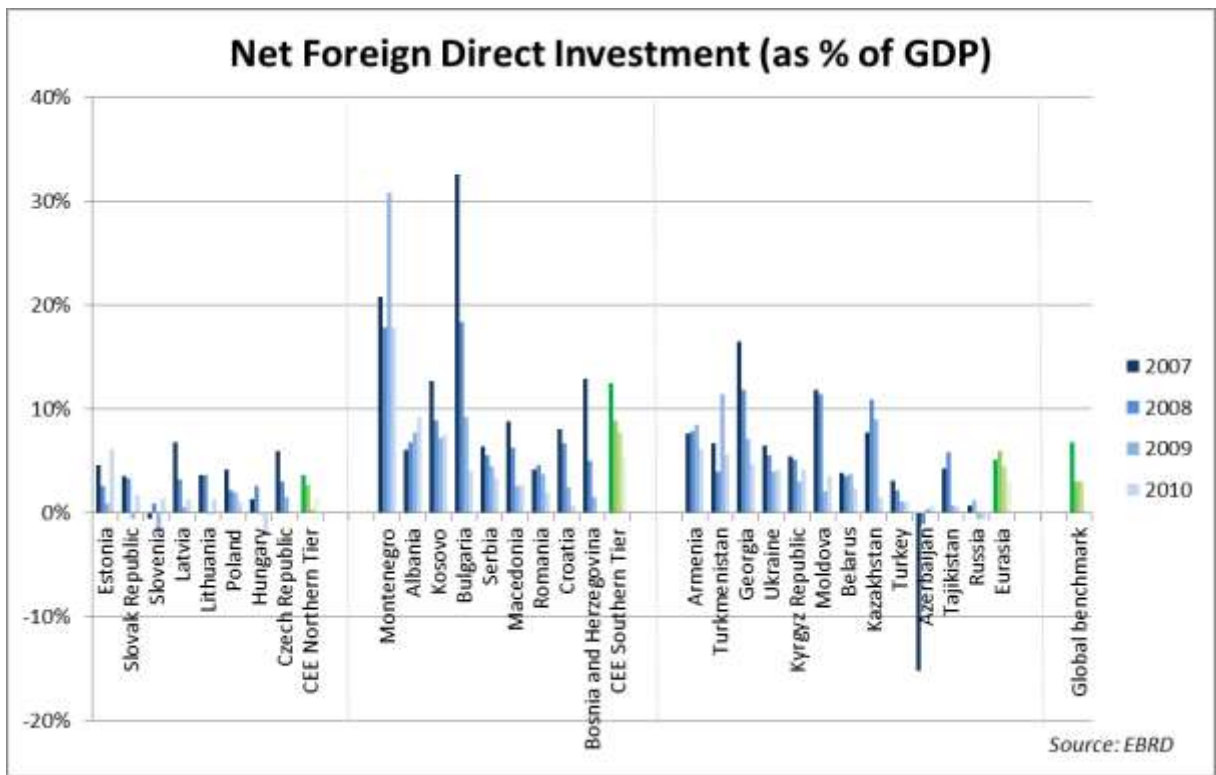




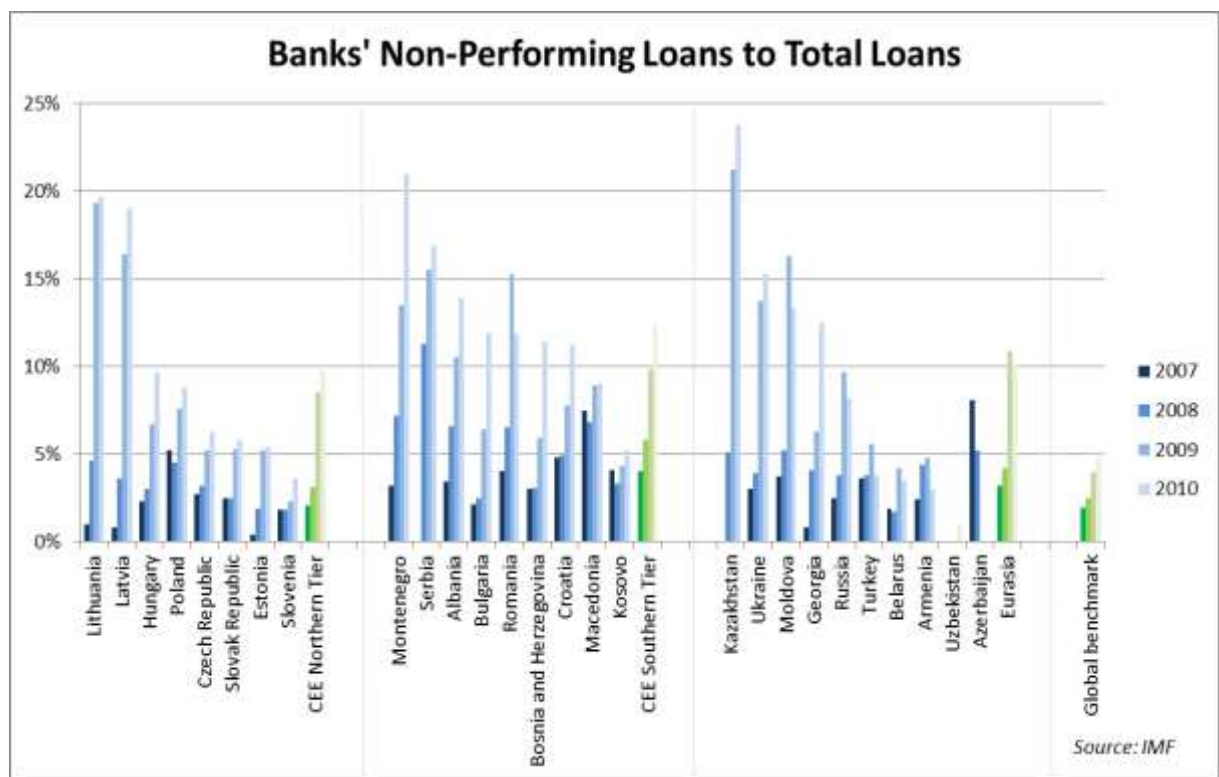
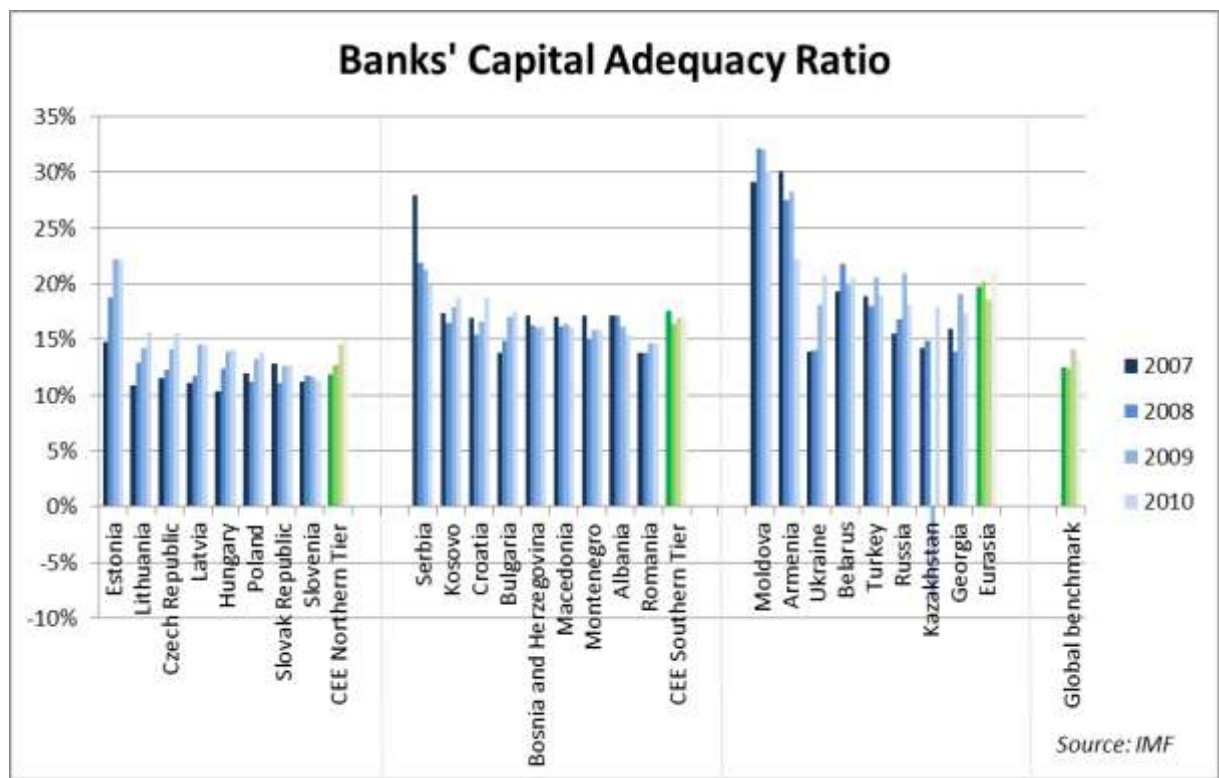
### 3.1.2. Other Macro Stability Indicators



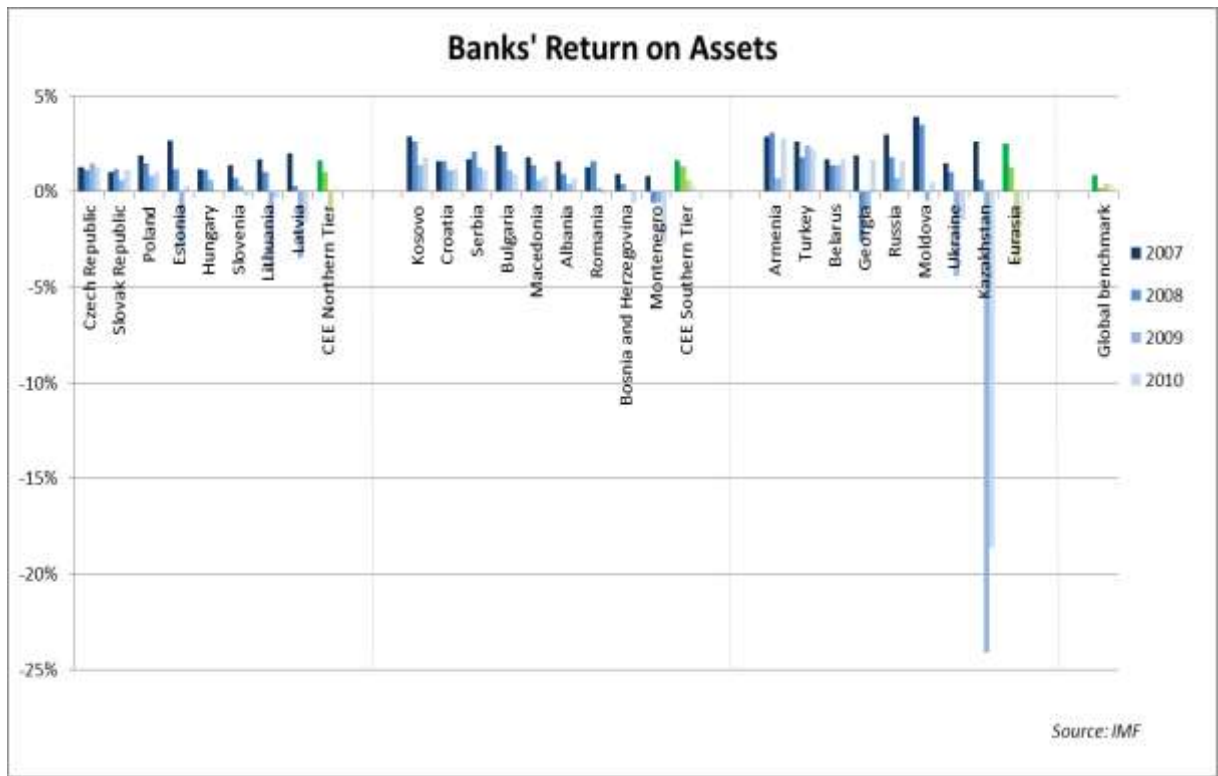
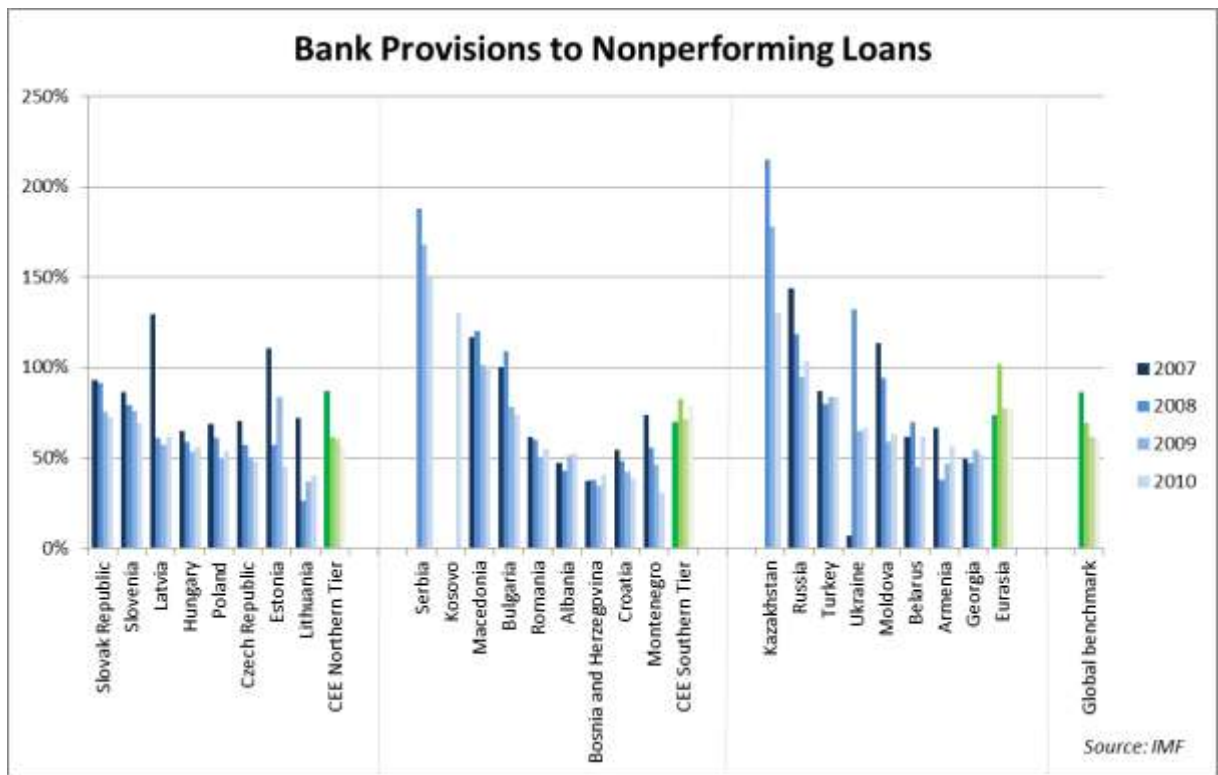


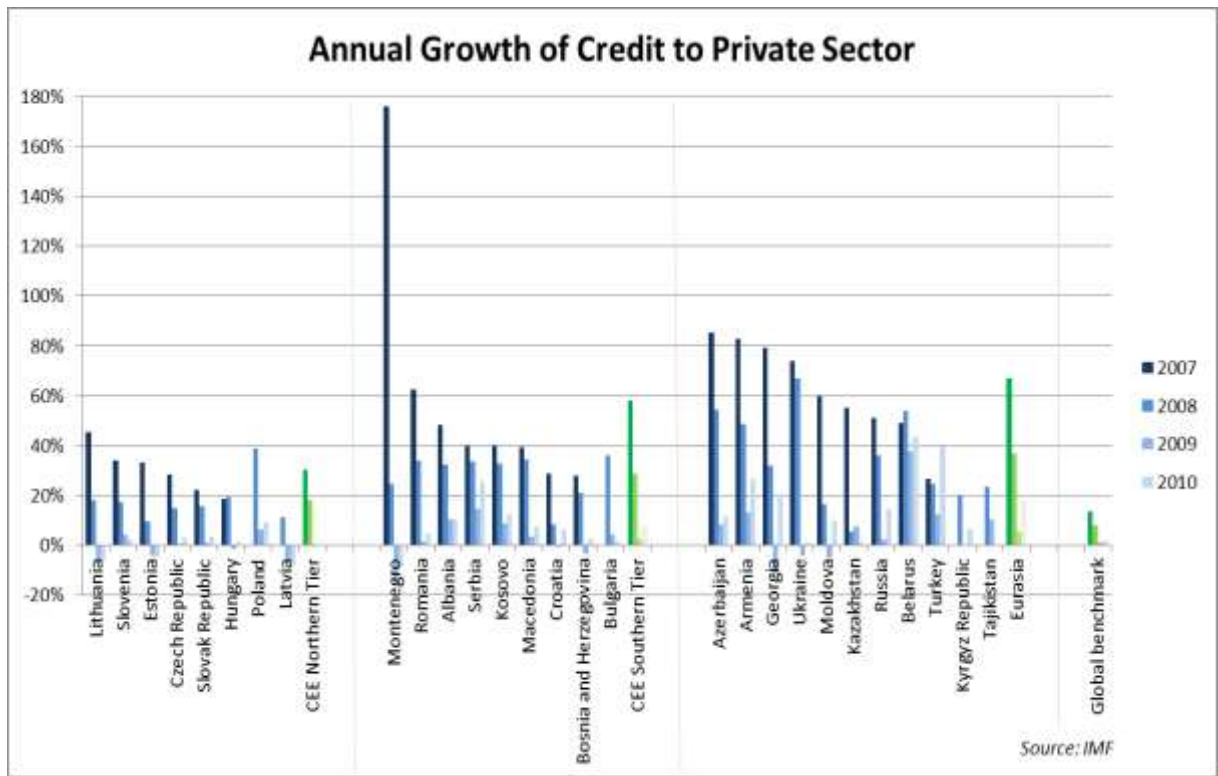
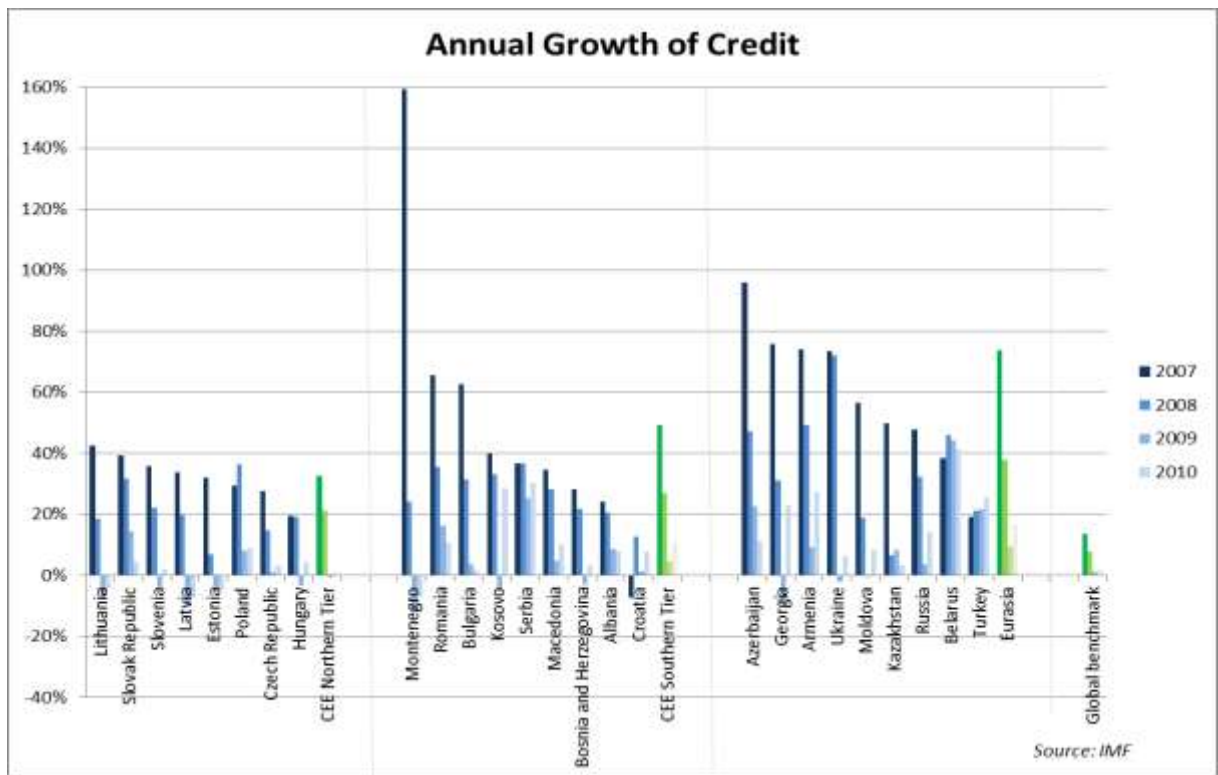


### 3.1.3. Financial Sector Stability Benchmarking Indicators

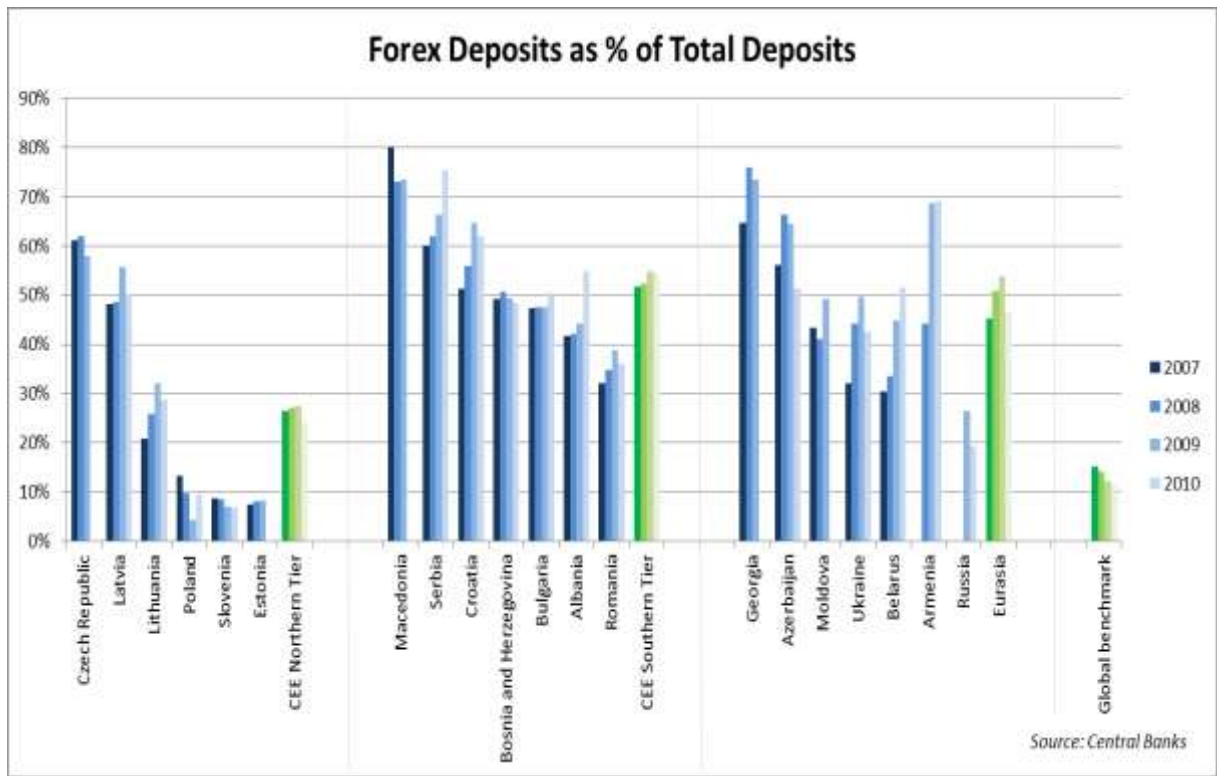
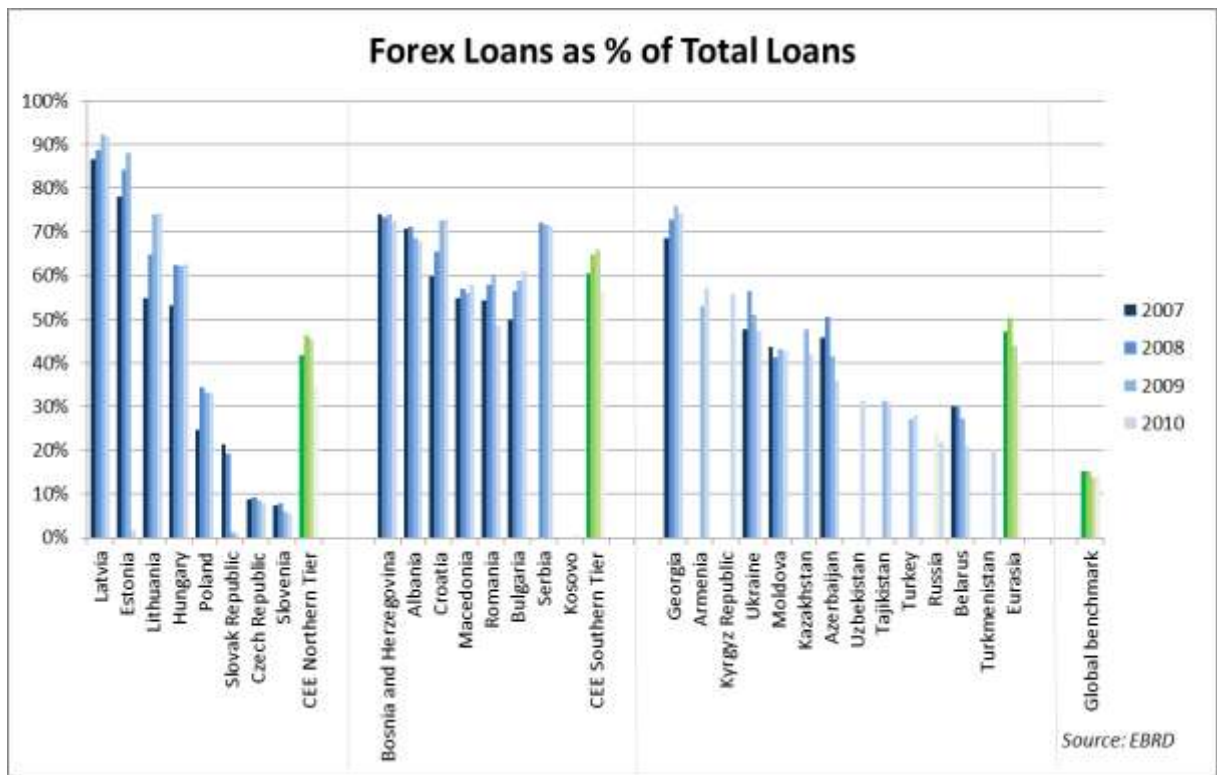


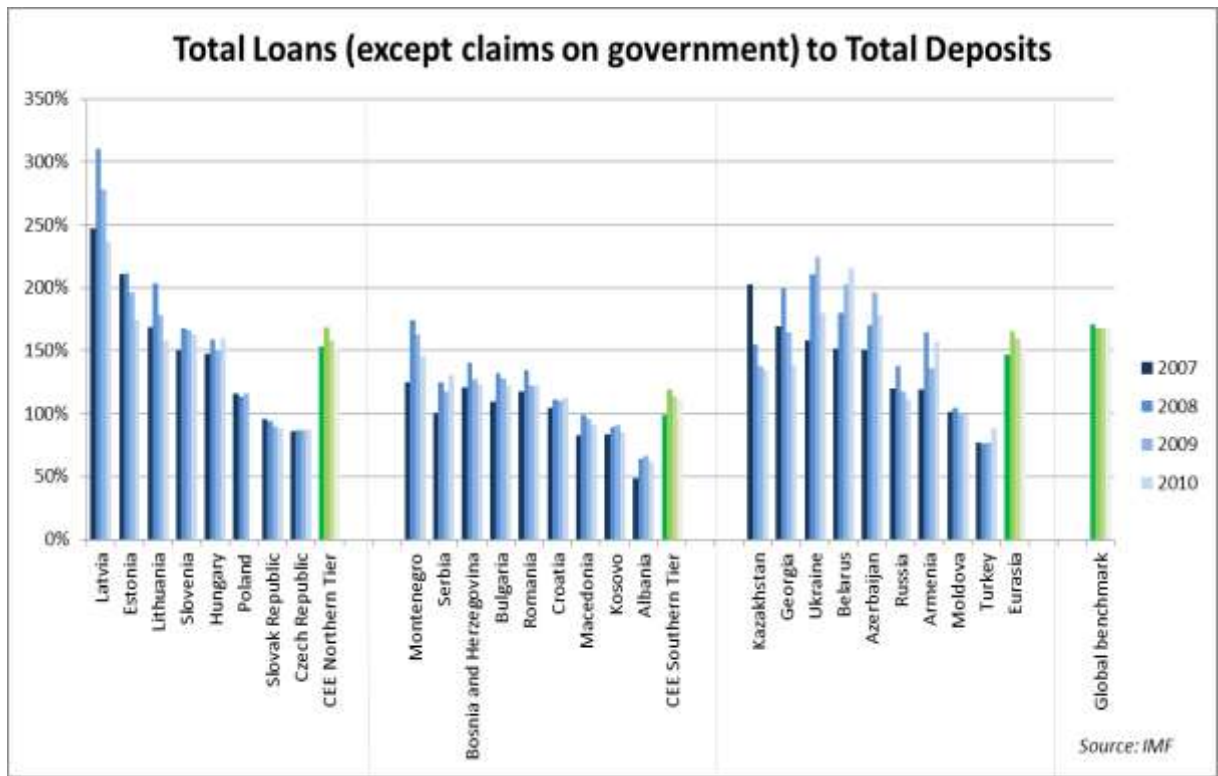
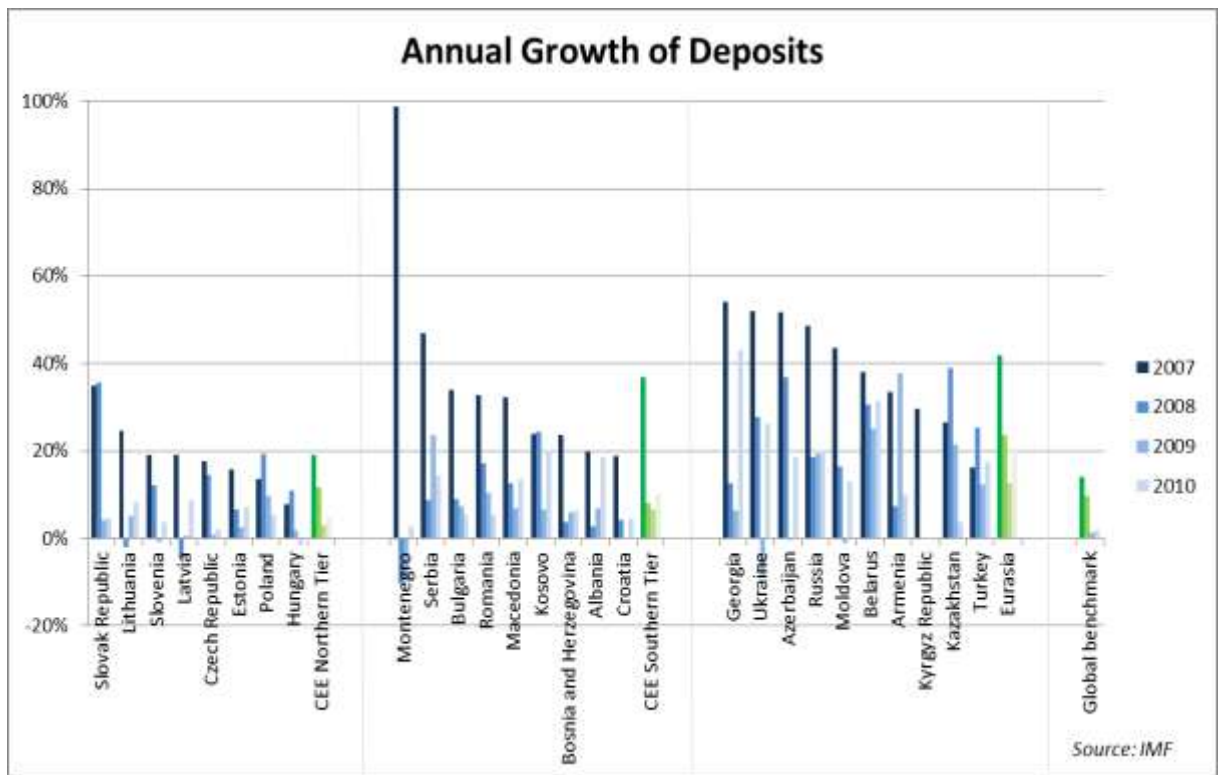




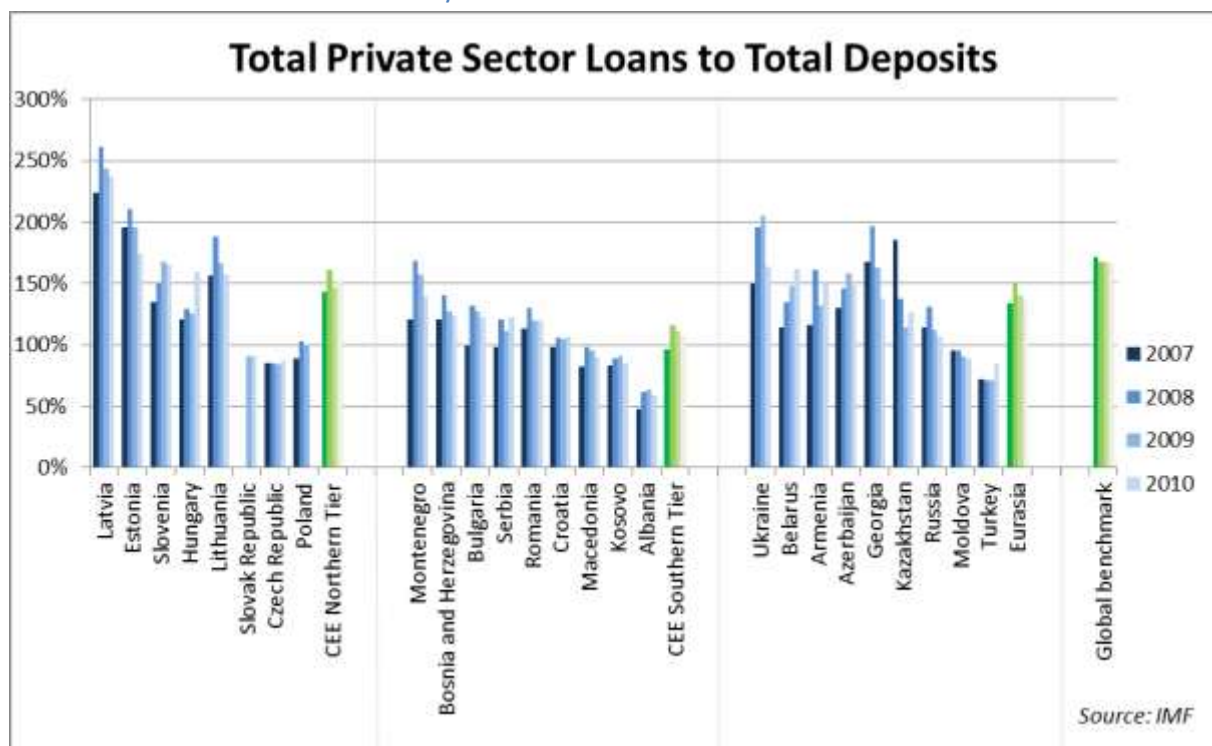






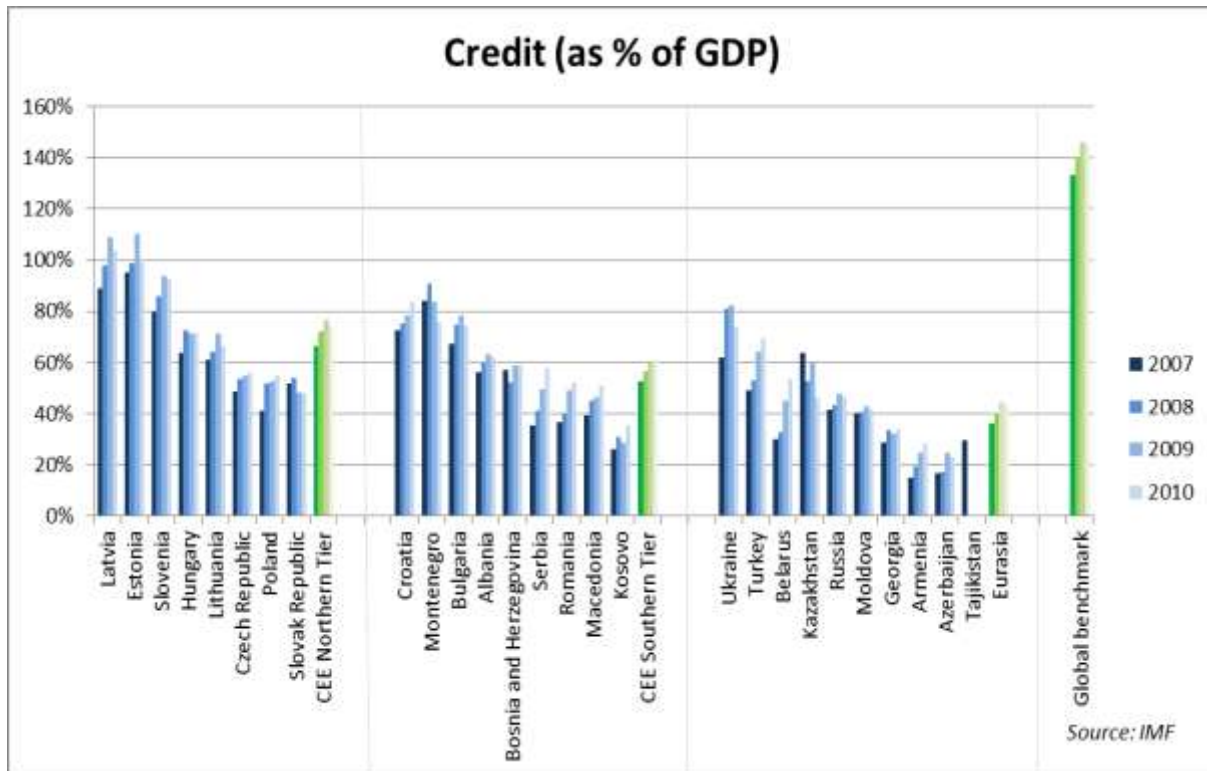
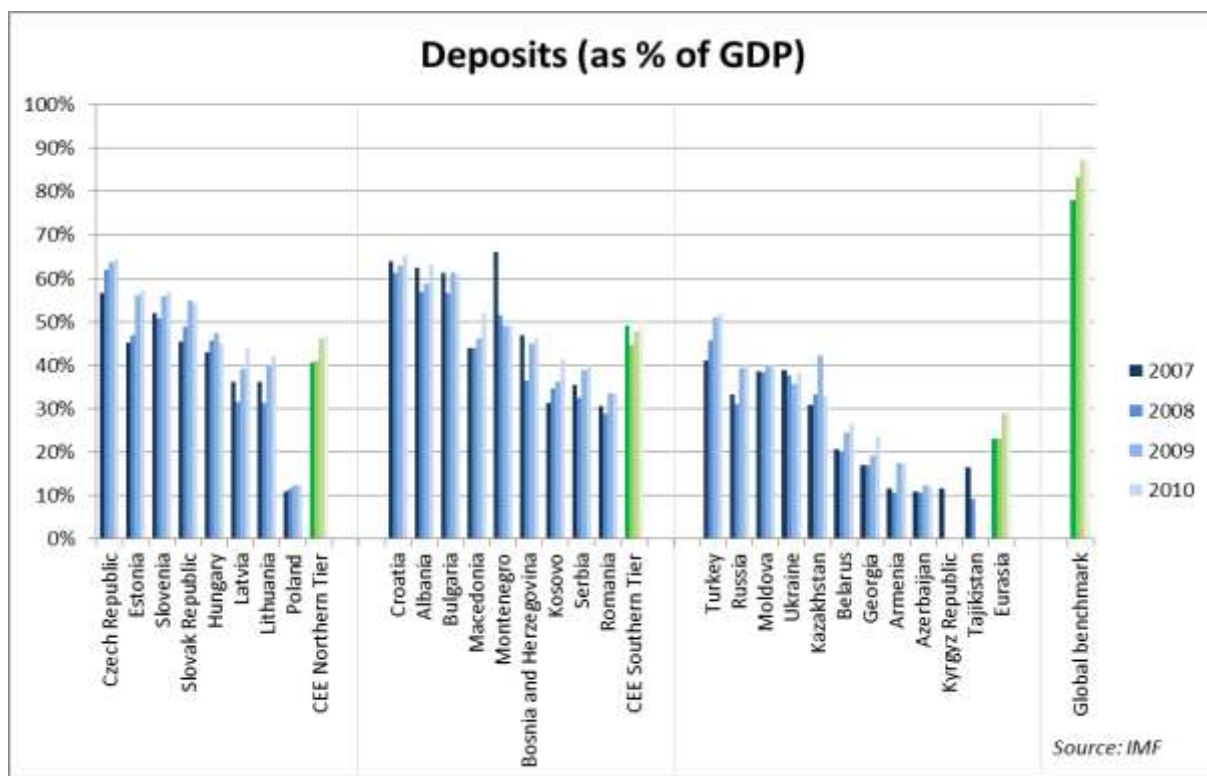


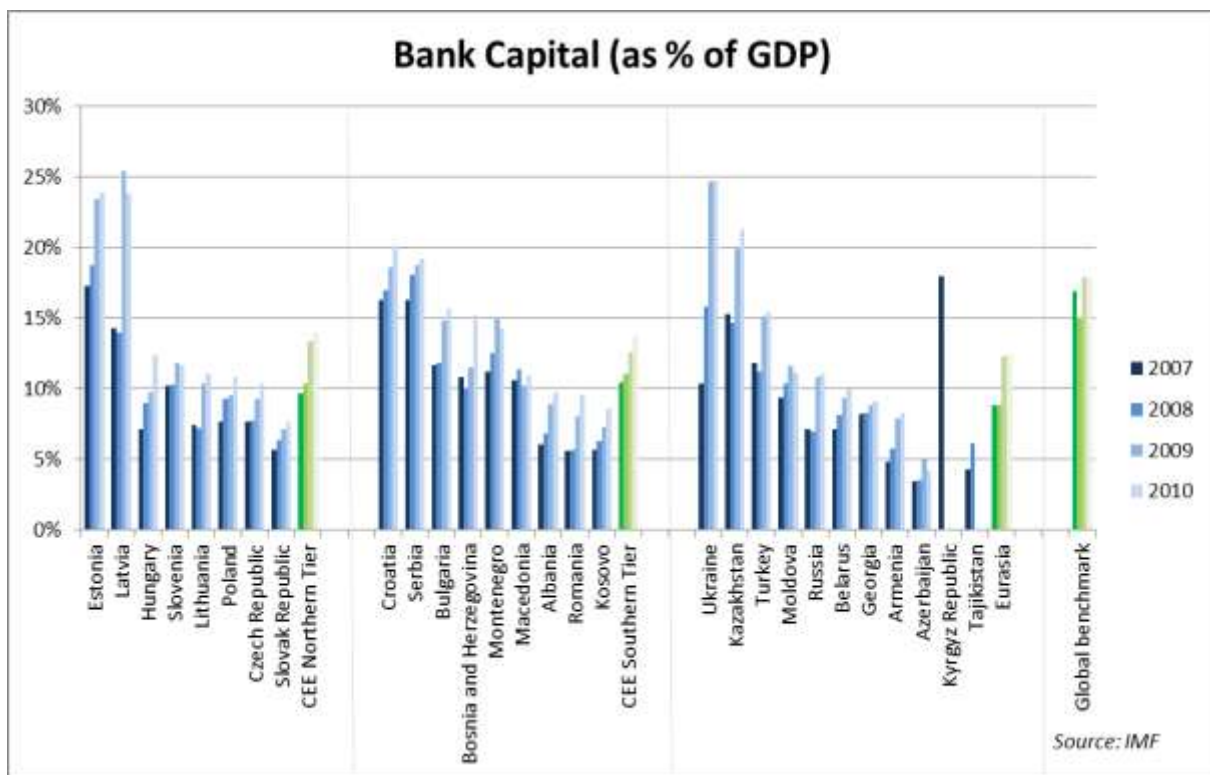
### 3.1.4. Other Financial Sector Stability Indicators

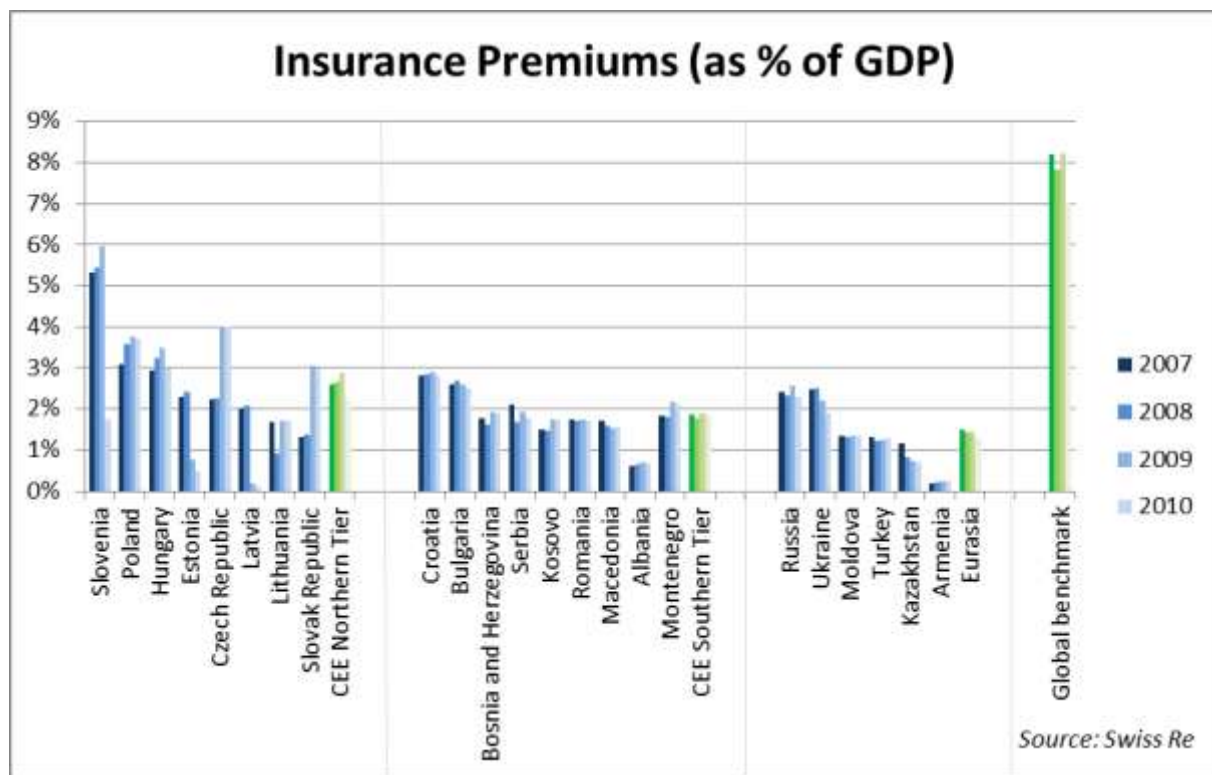


## 3.2. Financial Sector Size

### 3.2.1. Financial Sector Size Benchmarking Indicators



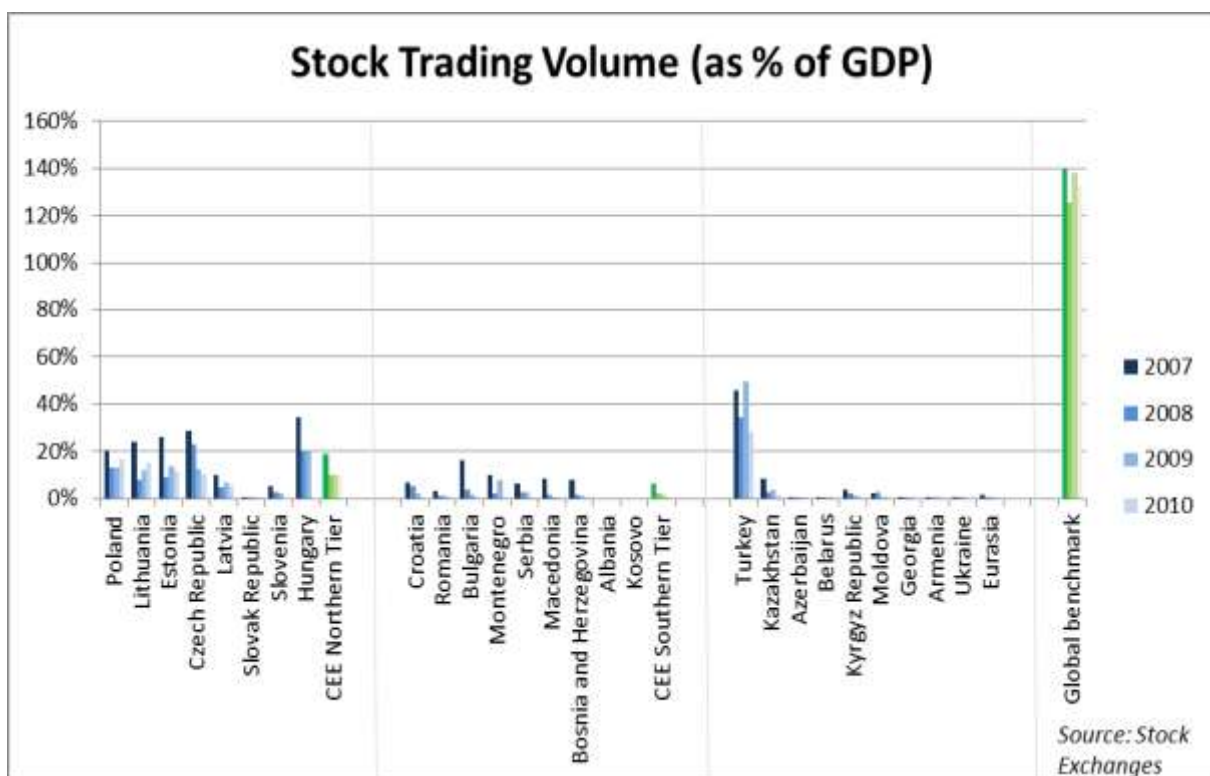




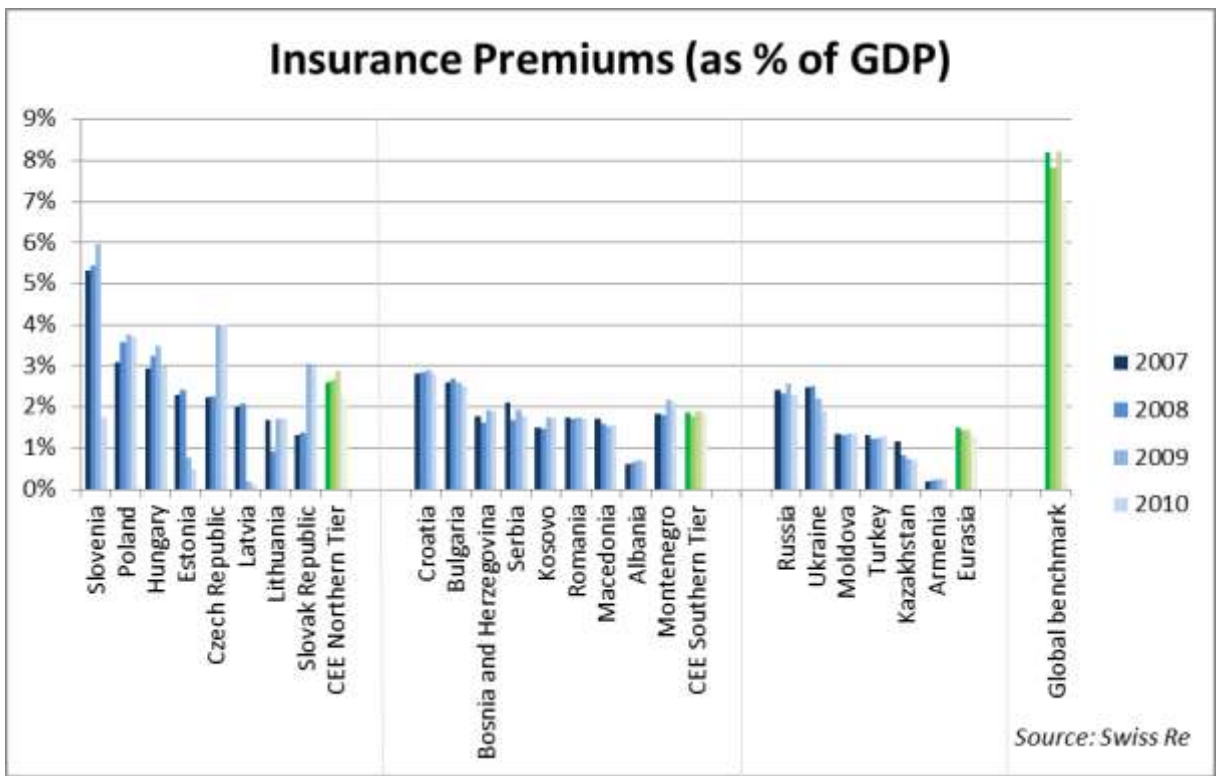
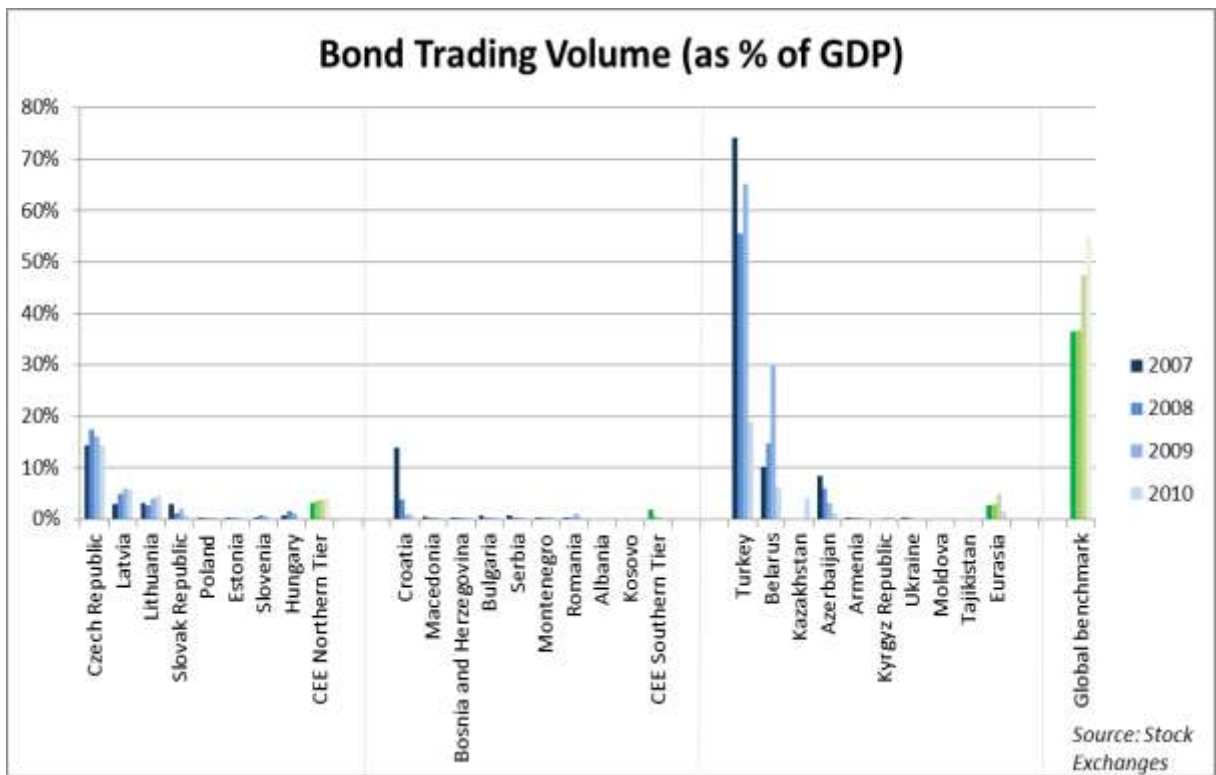


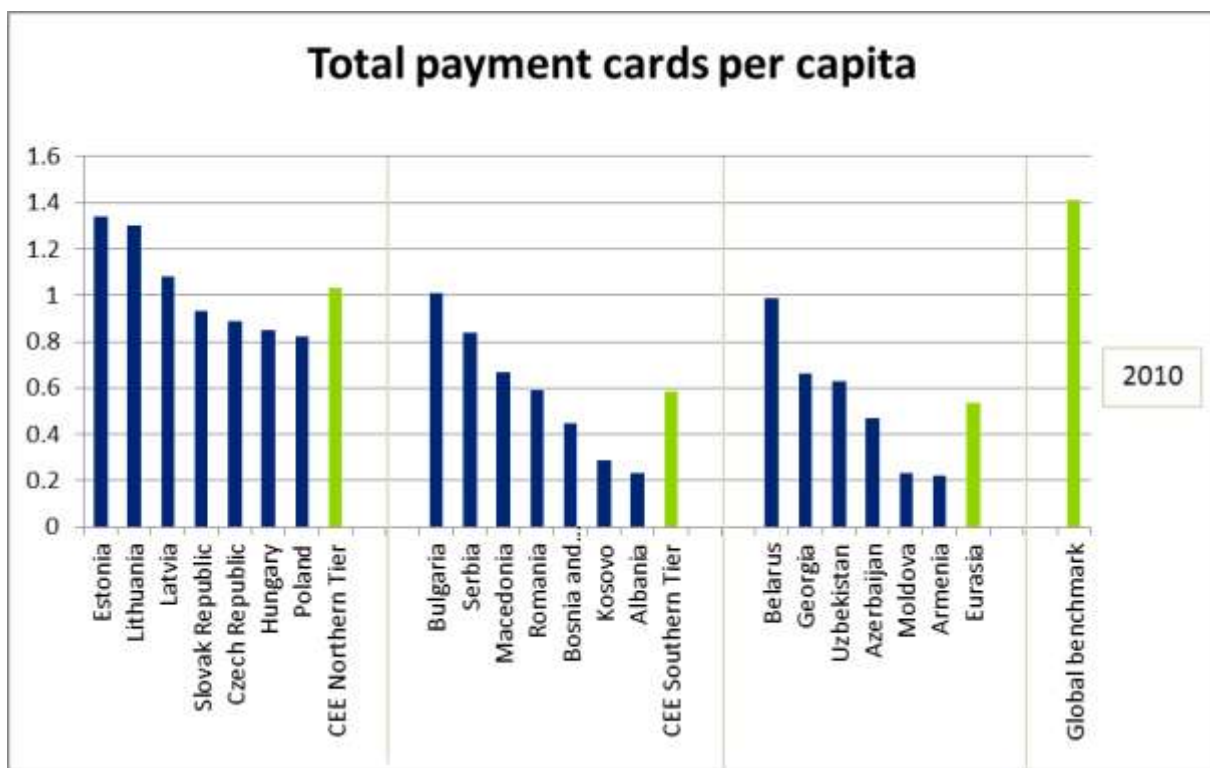
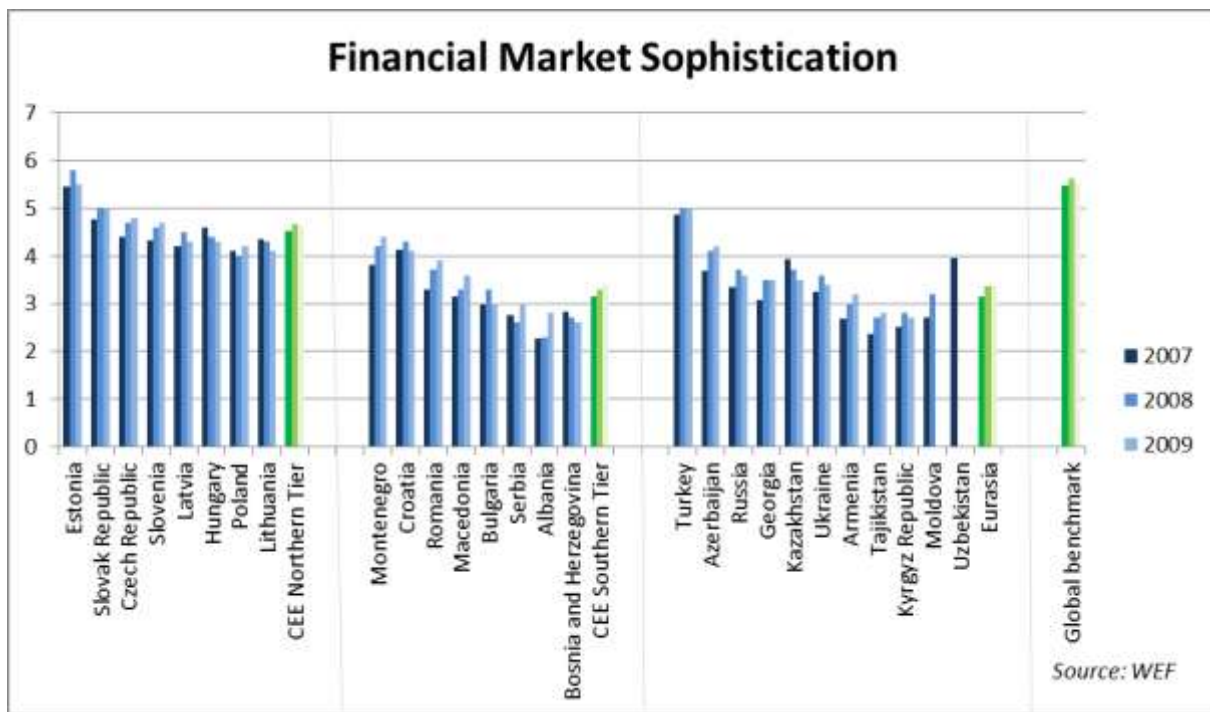
### 3.3.Sophistication of Financial Services

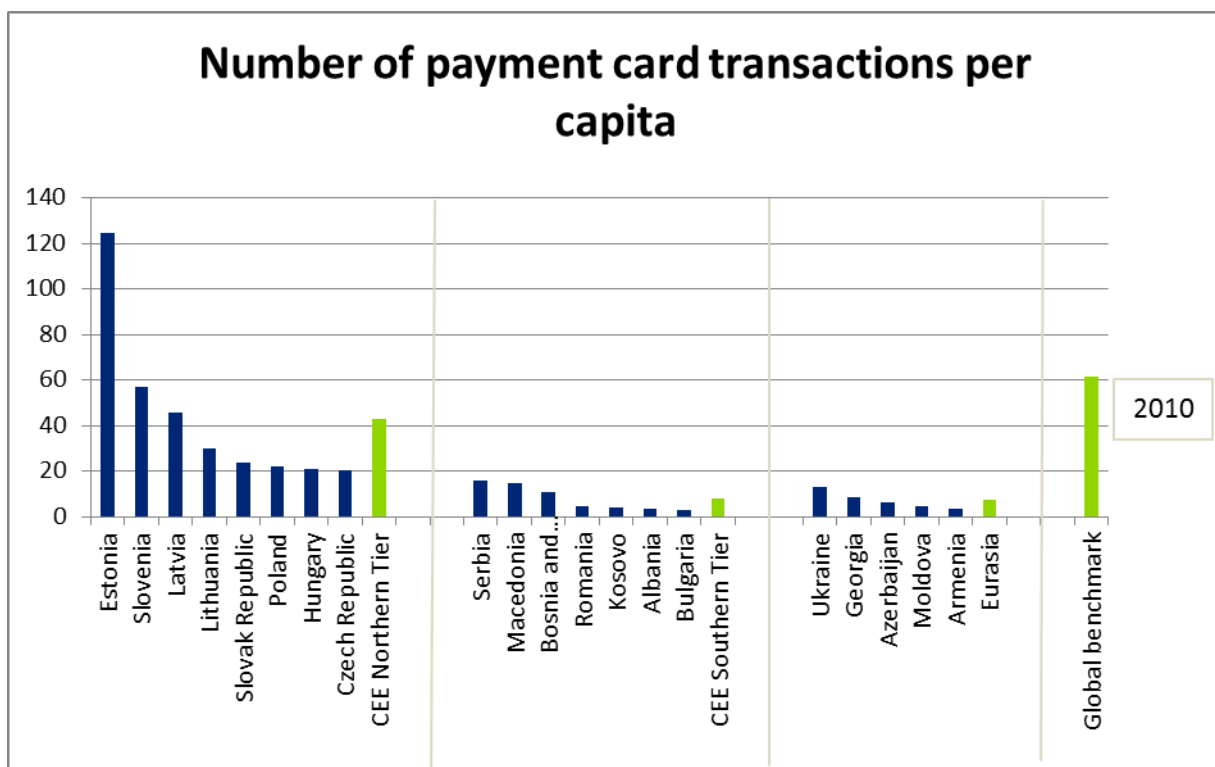
#### 3.3.1. Financial Sector Sophistication Benchmarking Indicators



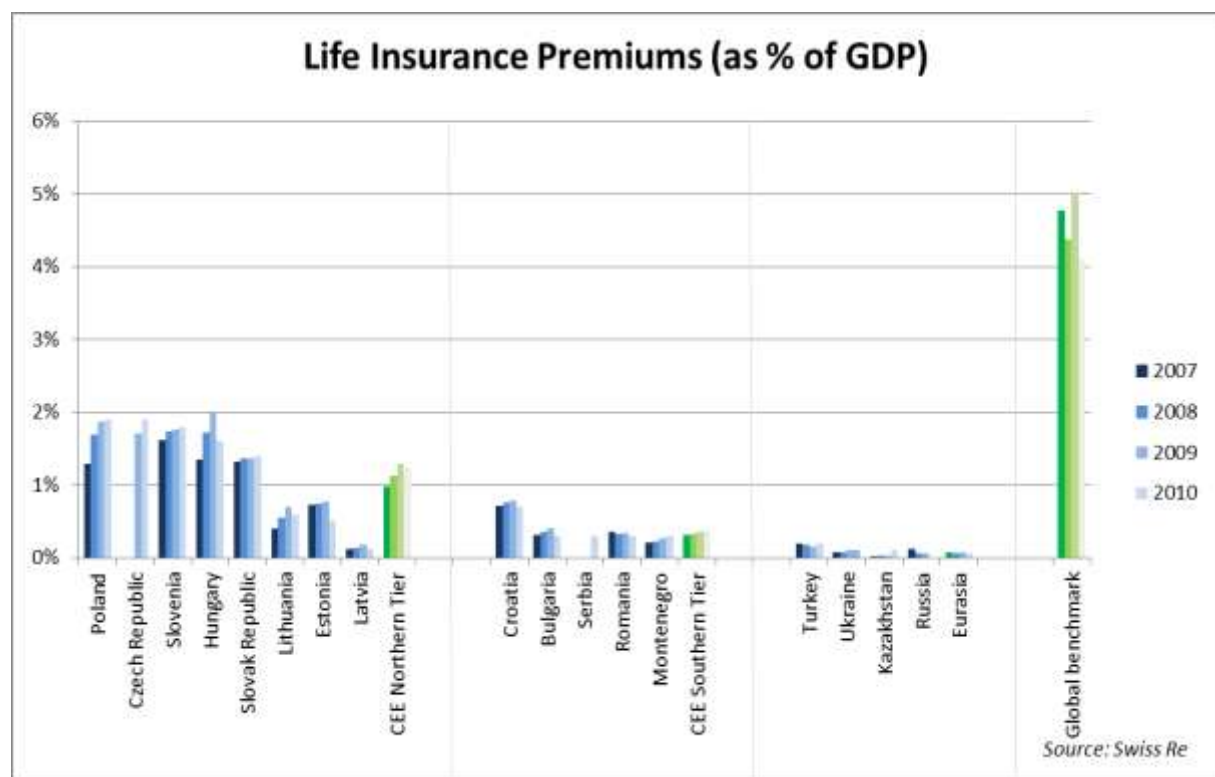


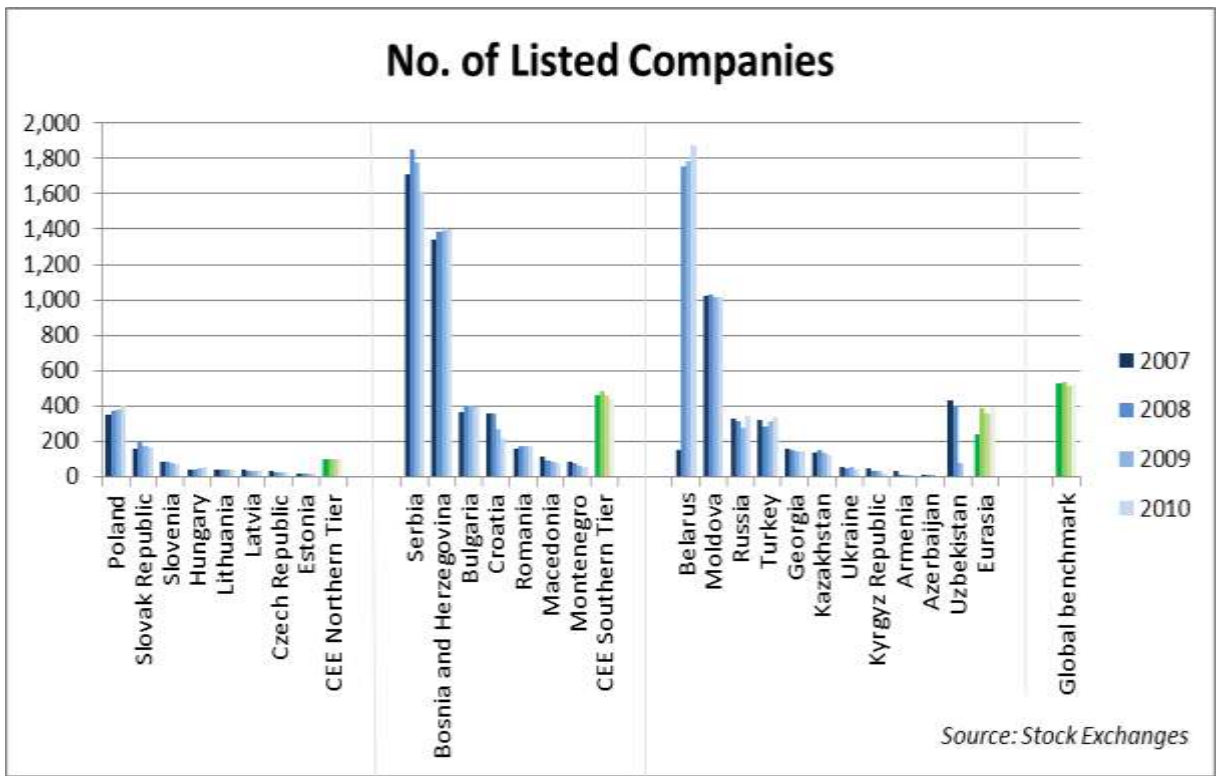
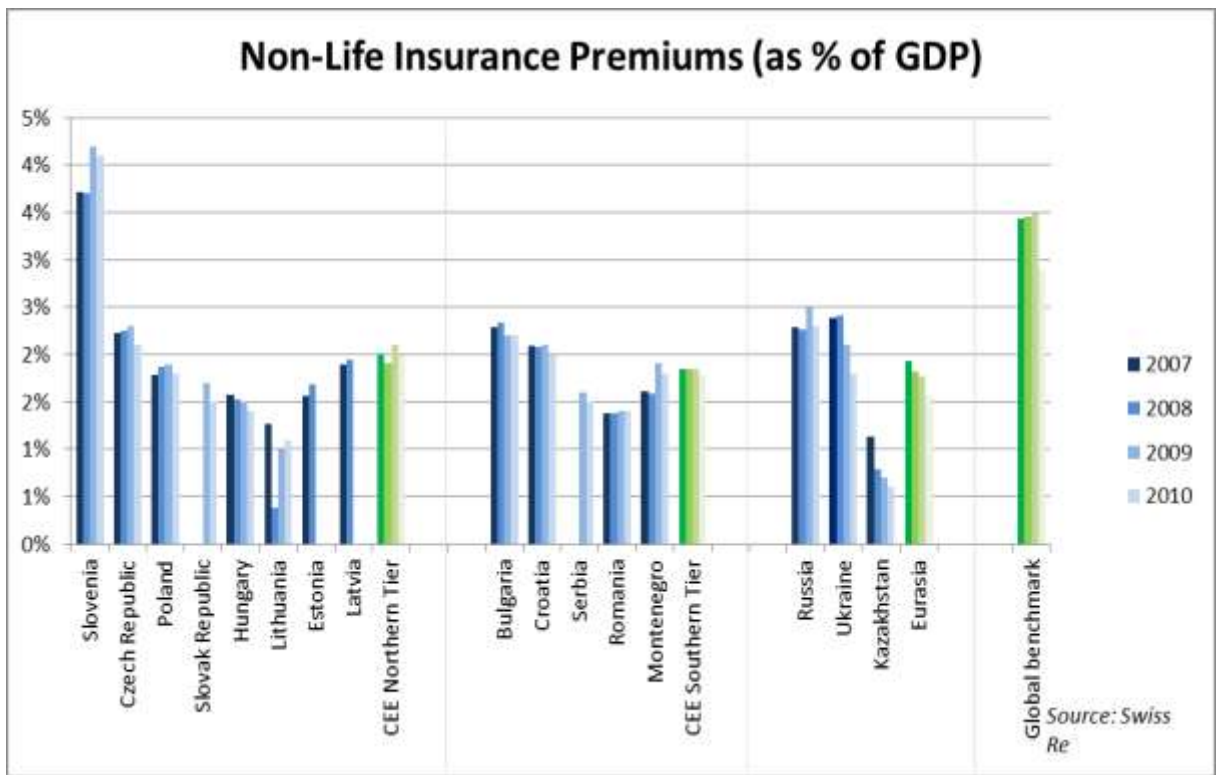






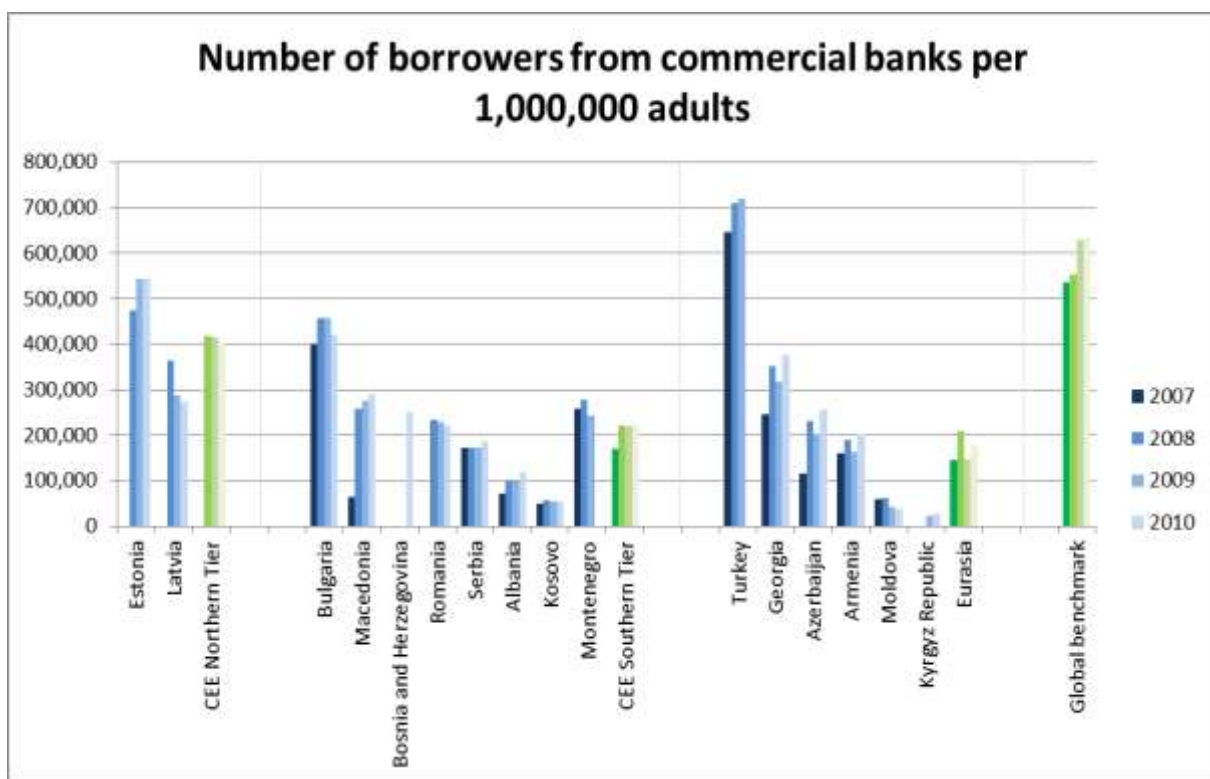
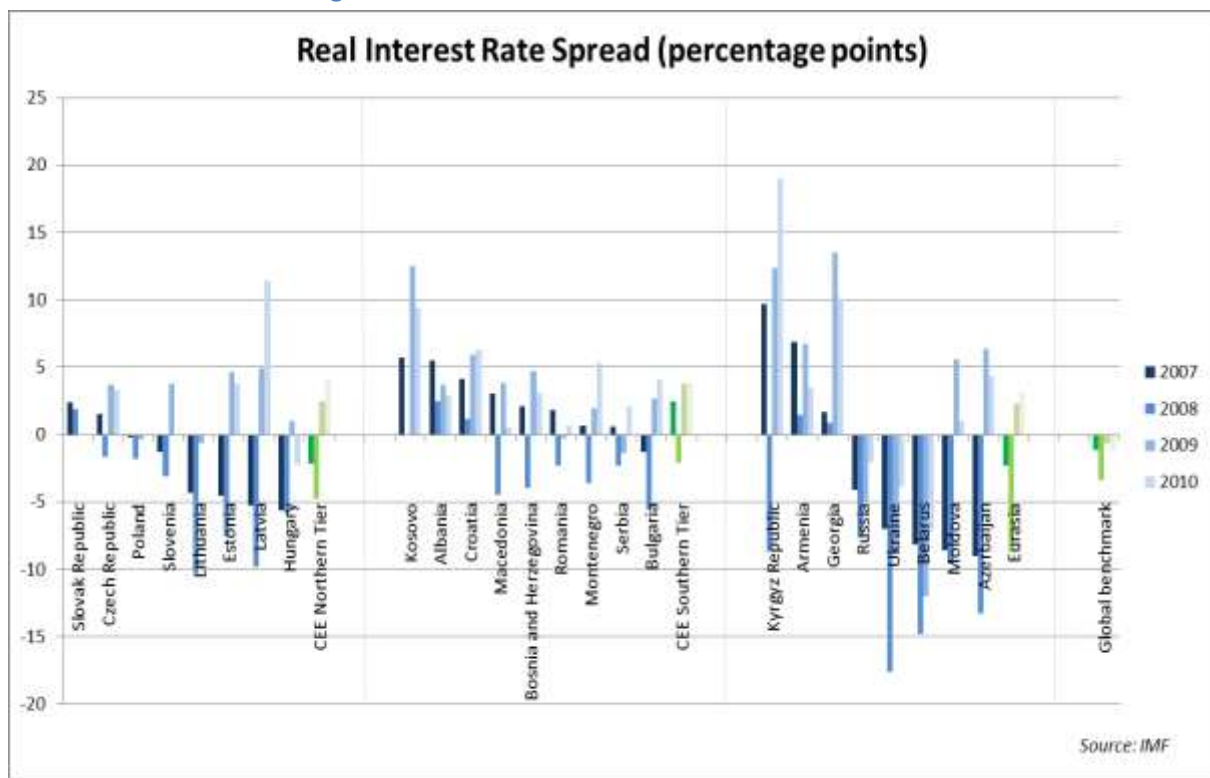
### 3.3.2. Other Financial Sector Sophistication Indicators

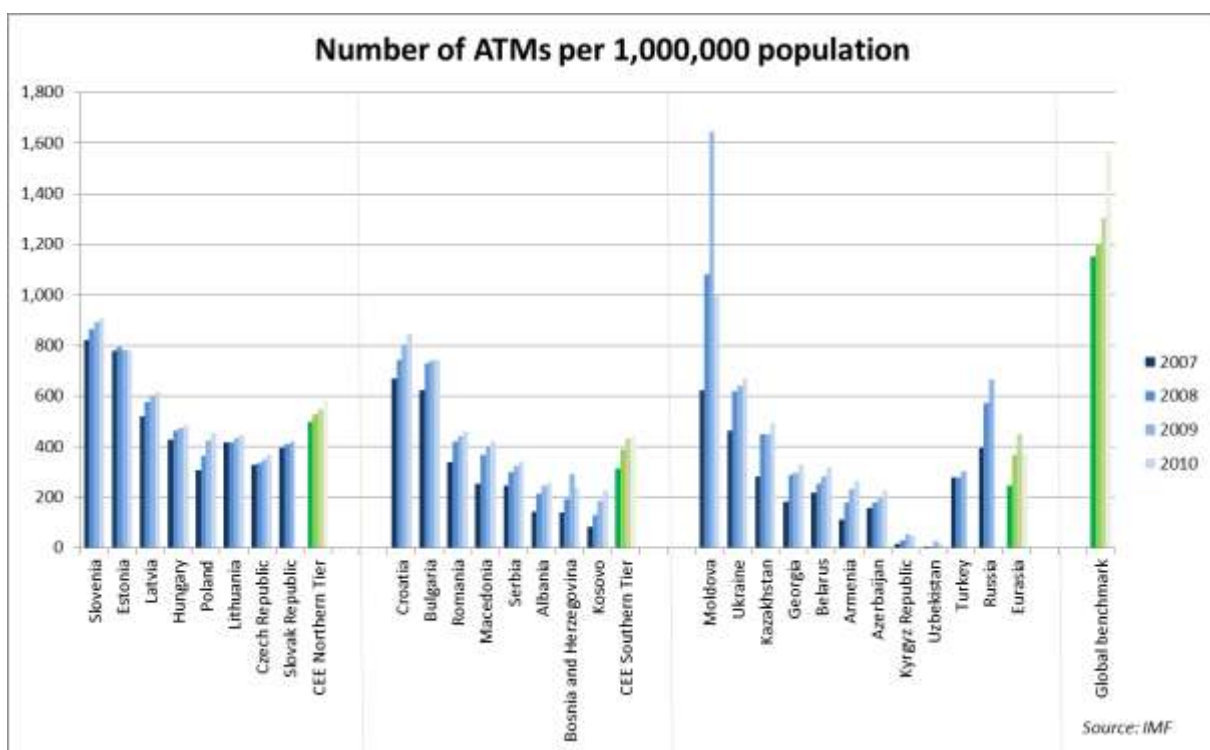
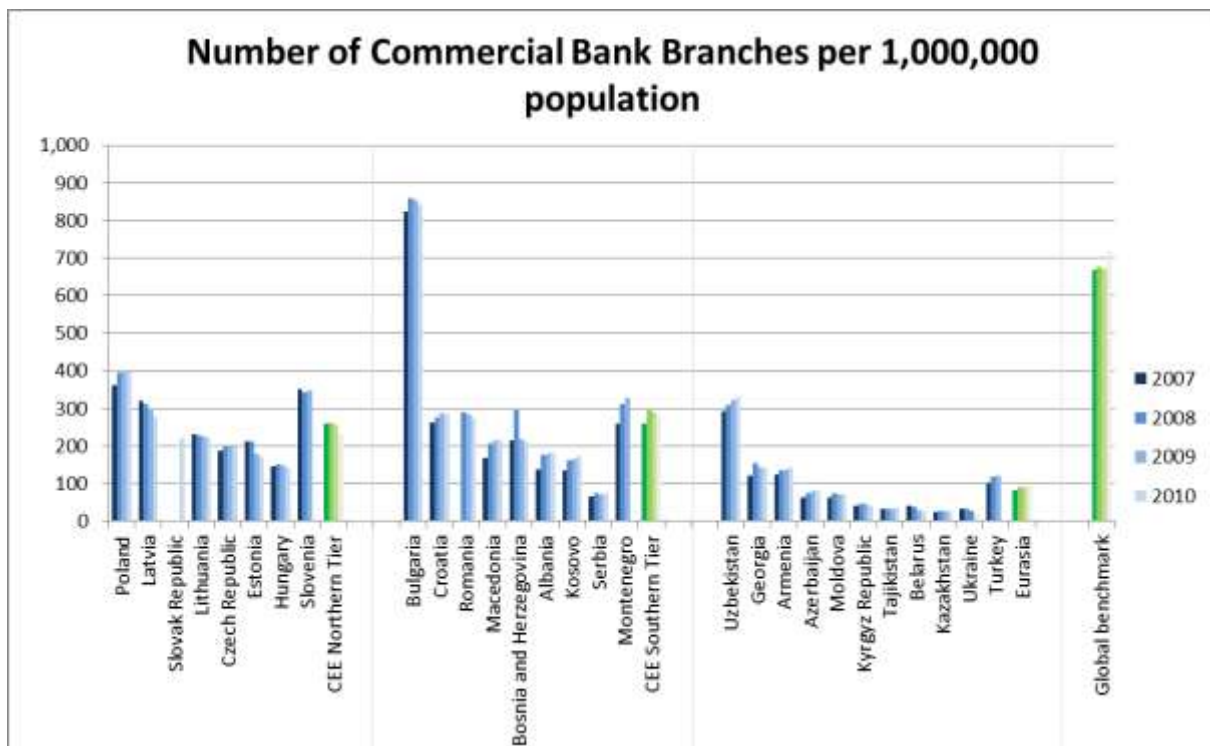




### 3.4. Access to Financial Services

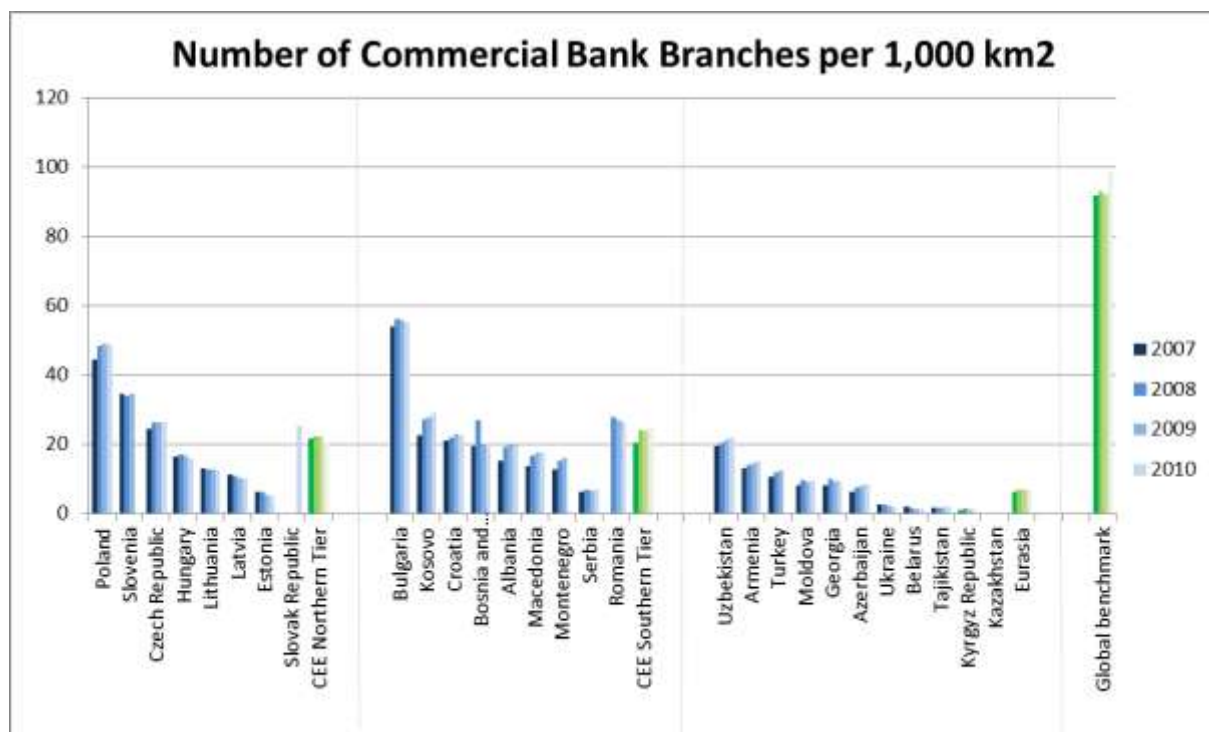
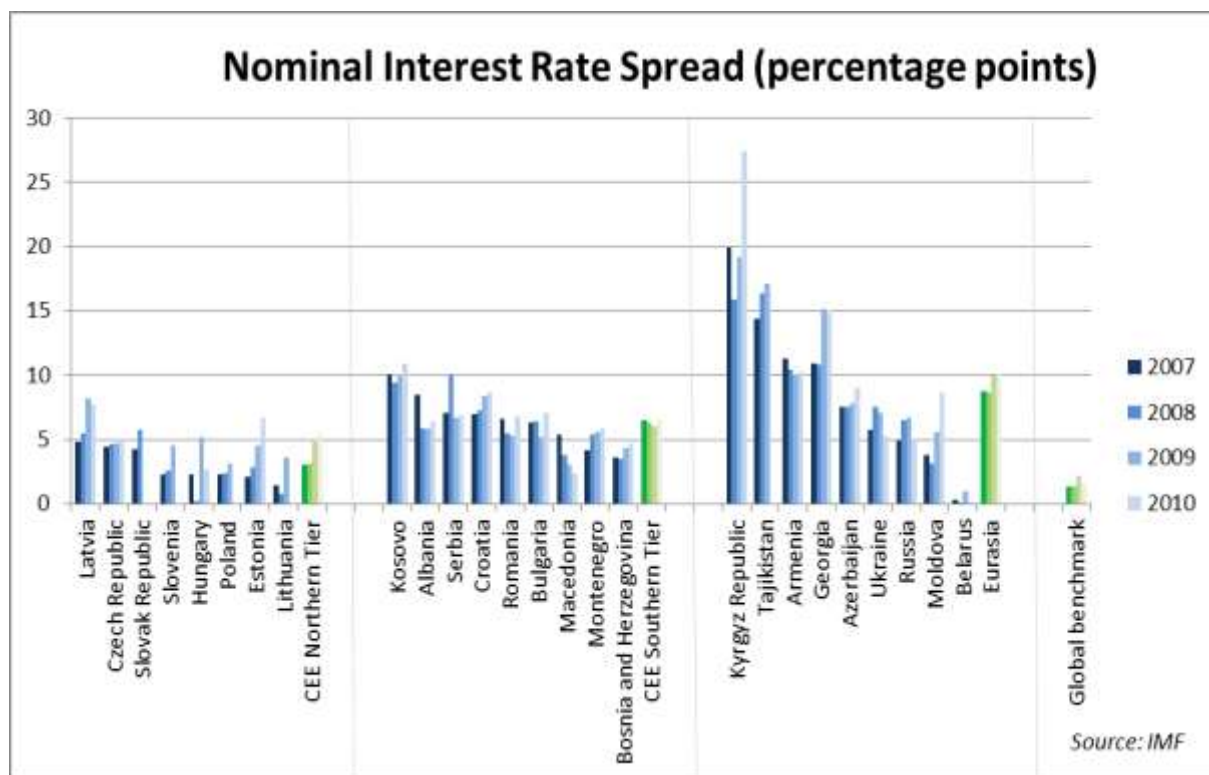
#### 3.4.1. Access Benchmarking Indicators



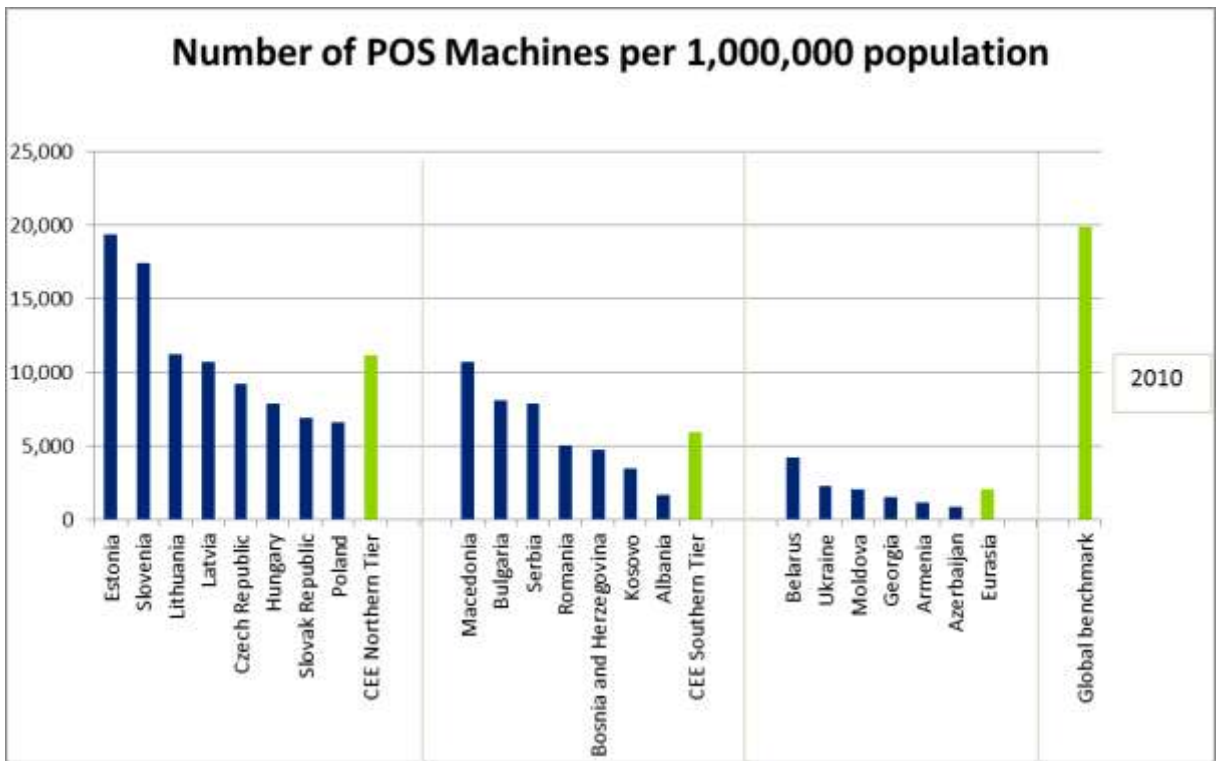
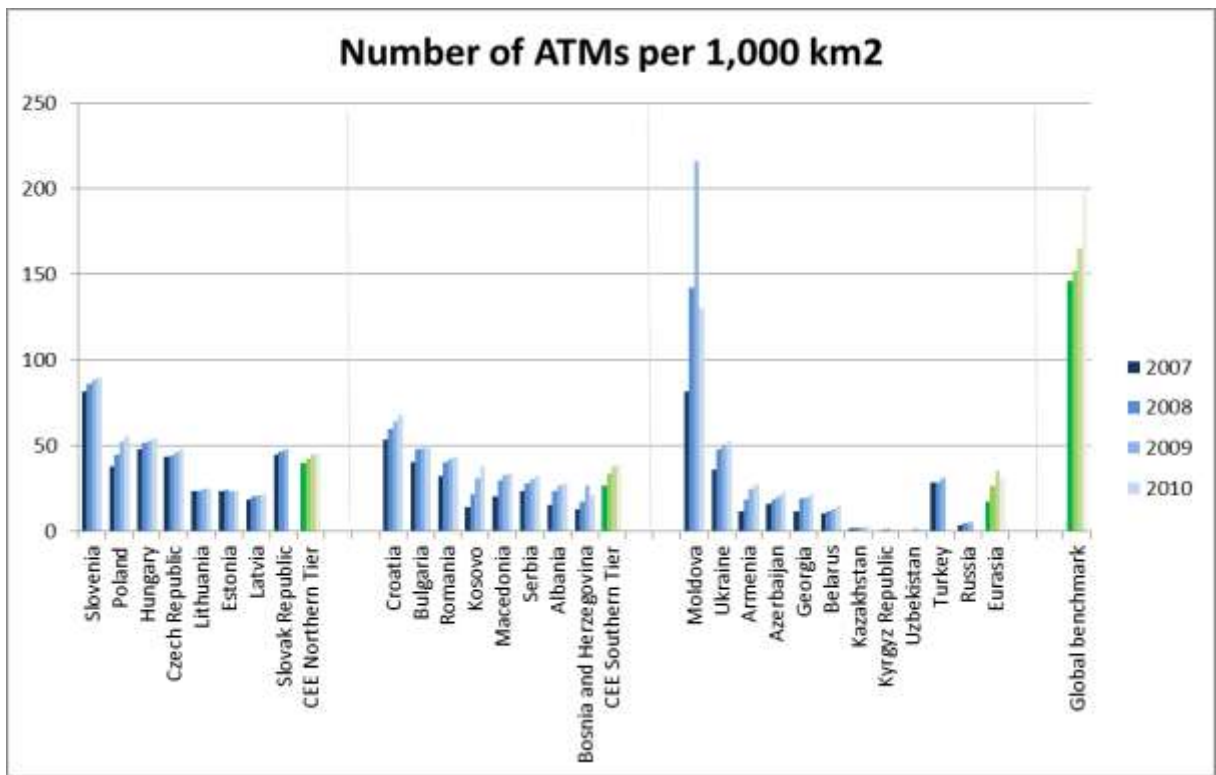


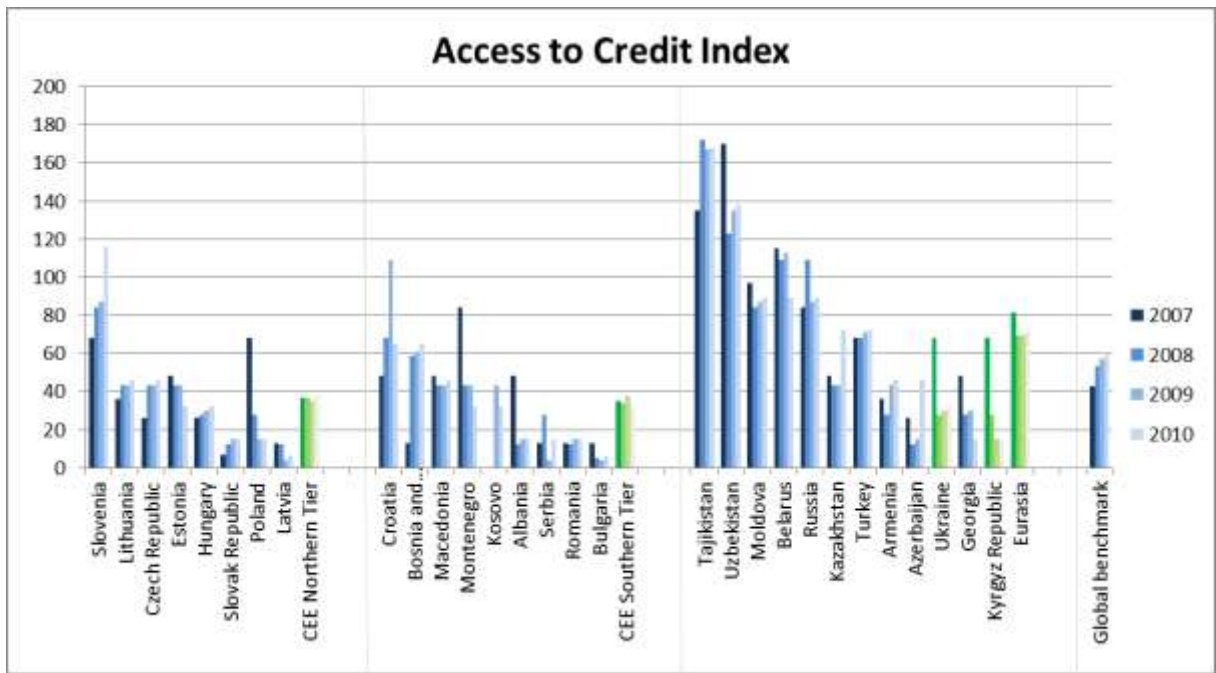


### 3.4.2. Other Access Indicators



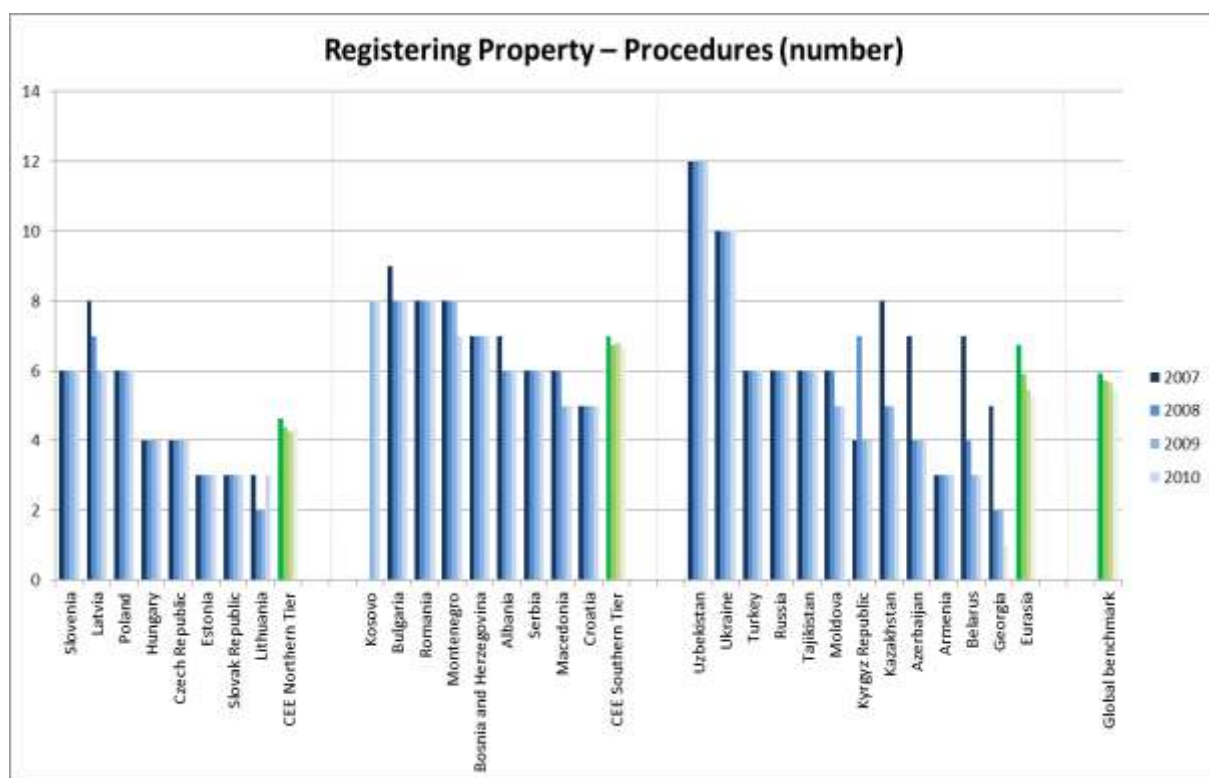
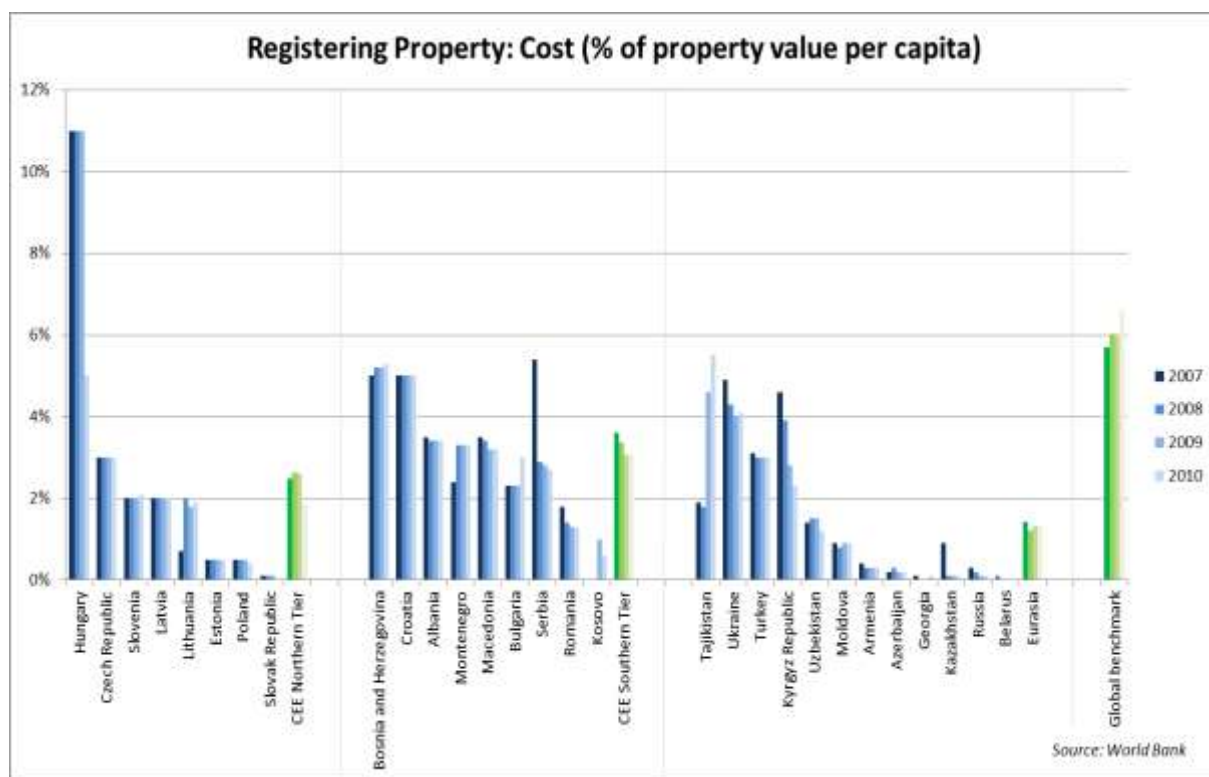


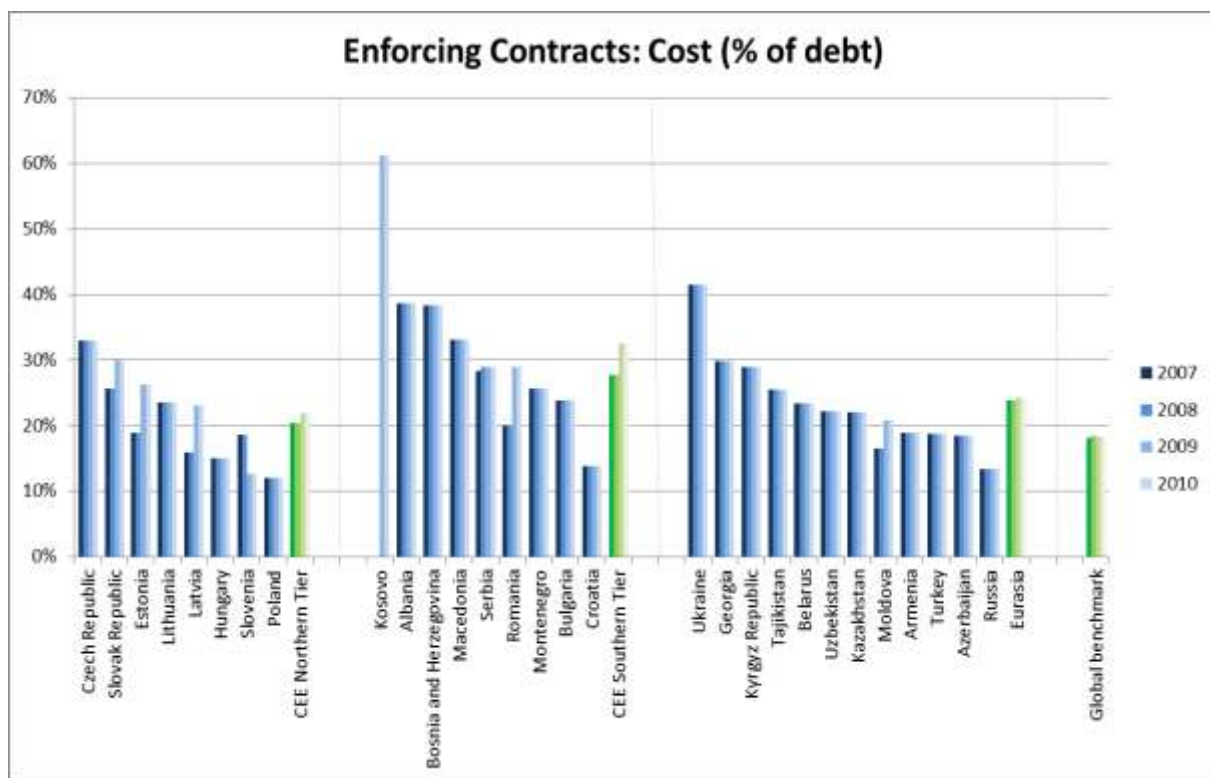
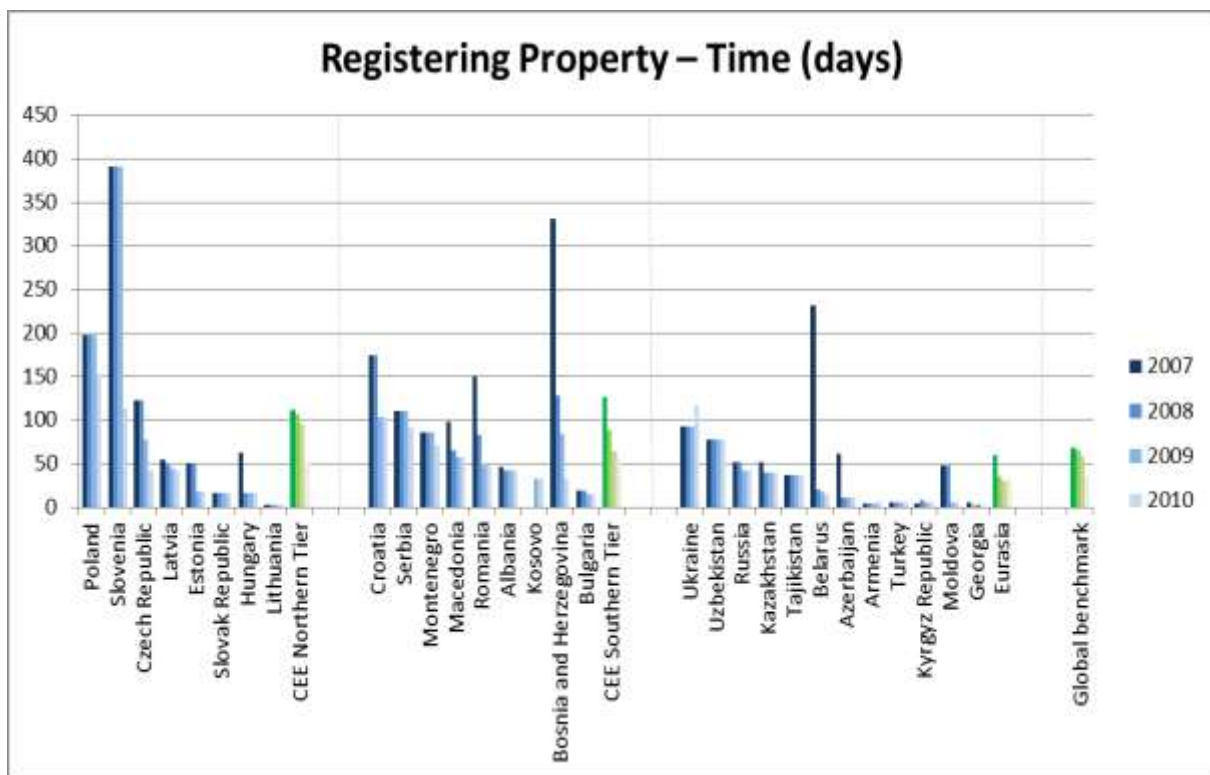


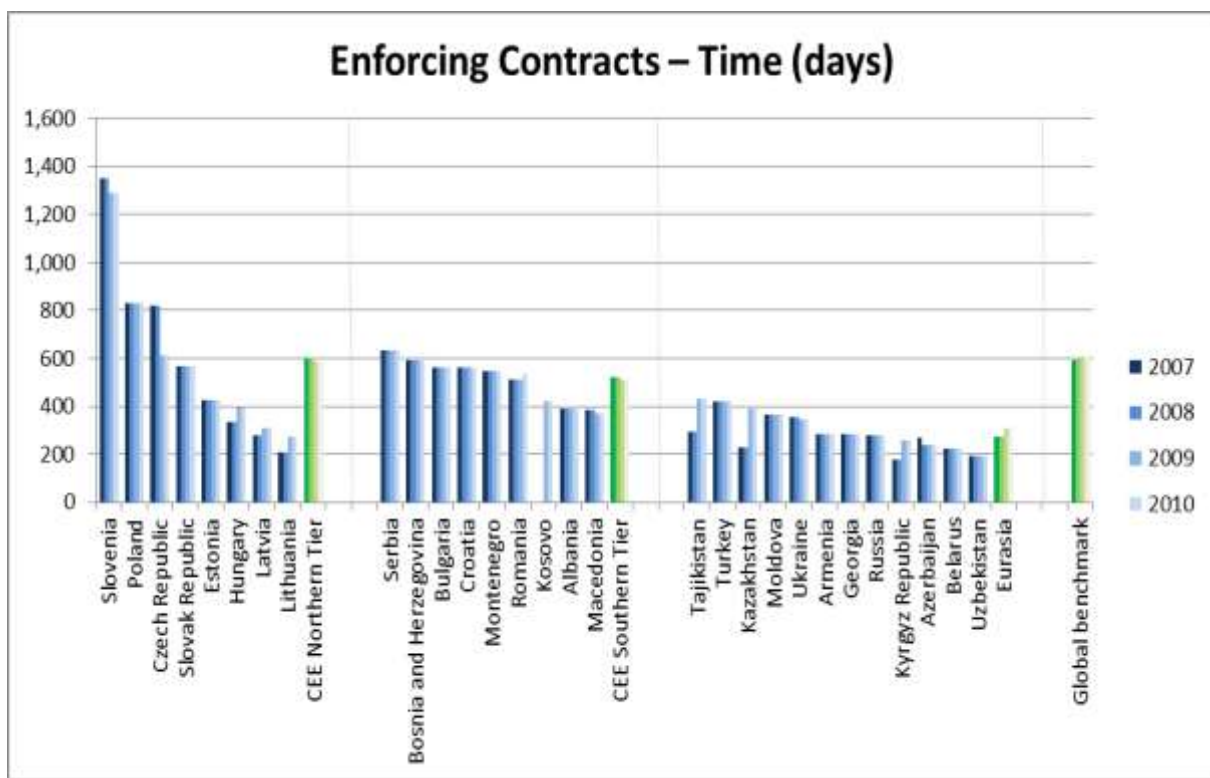
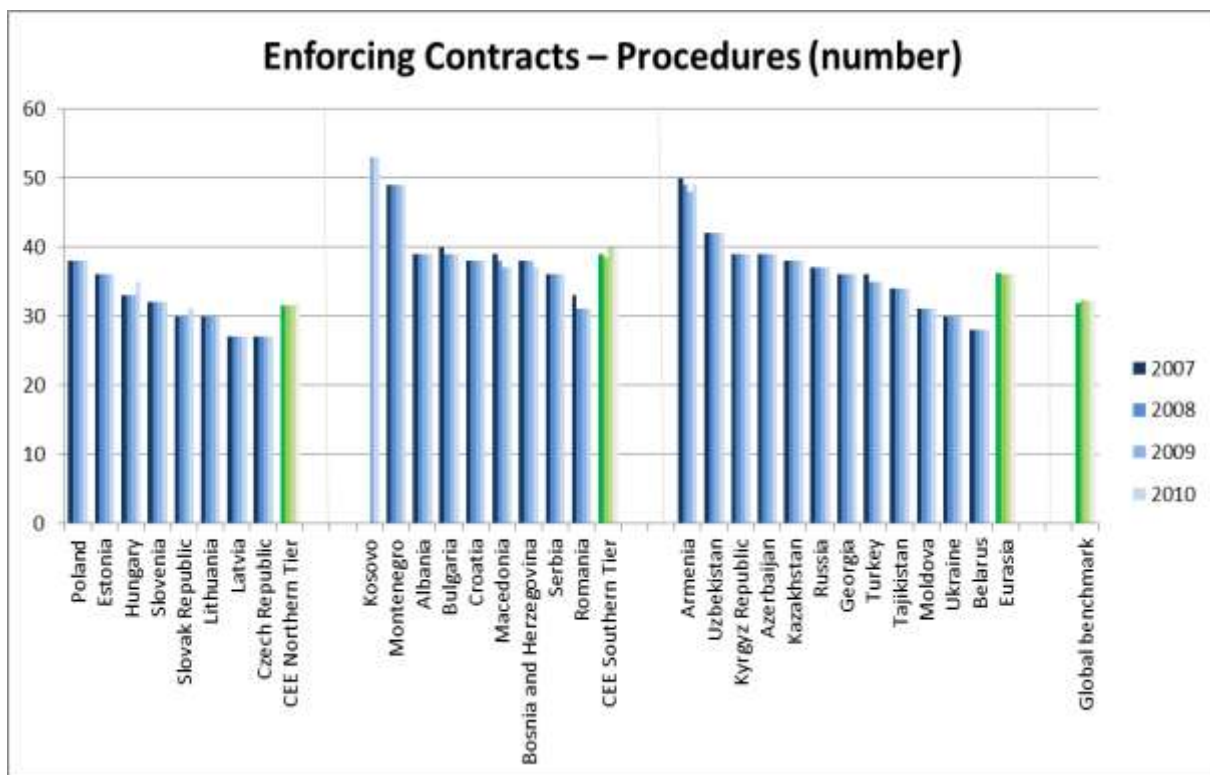


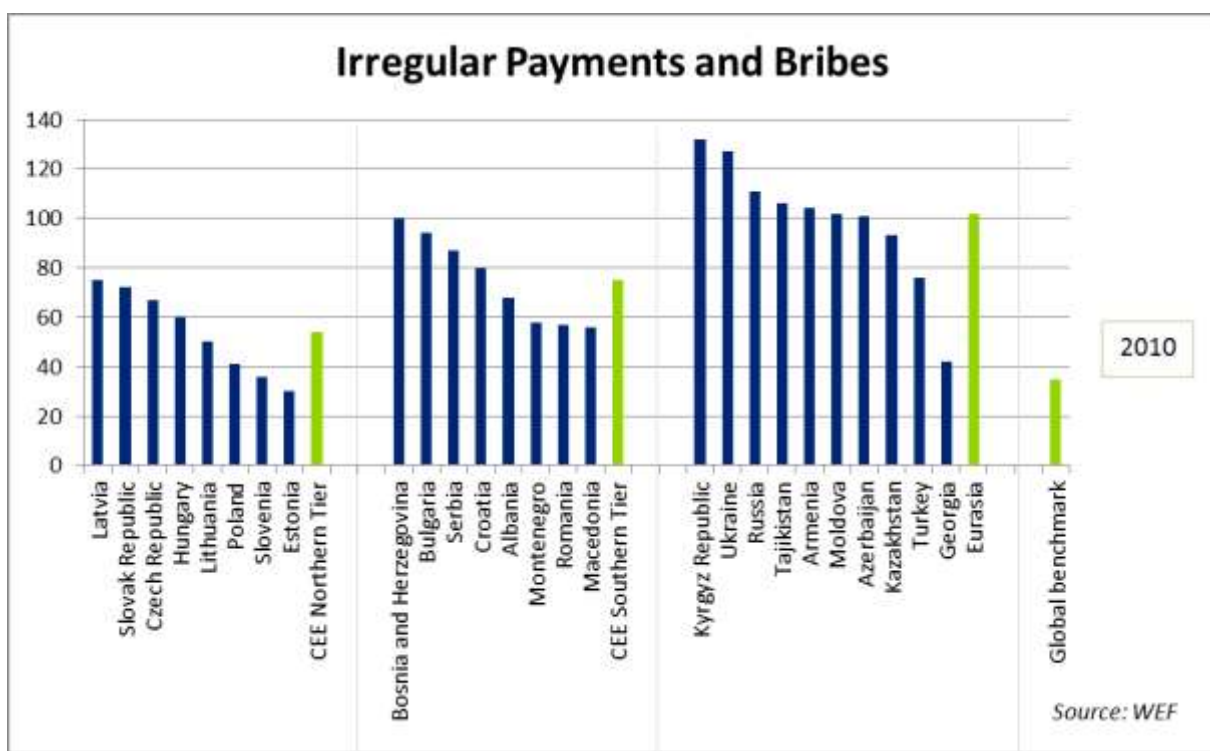
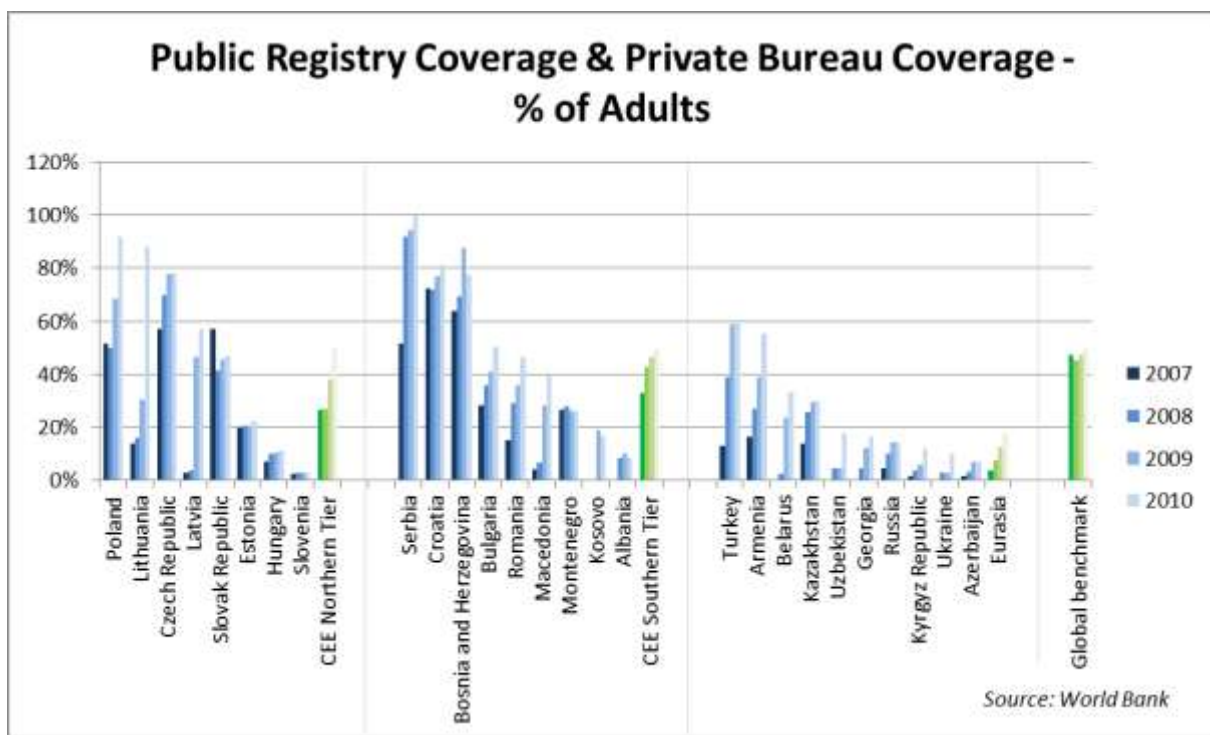
## 4. Financial Sector Enabling Environment

### 4.1.1. Enabling Environment Benchmarking Indicators



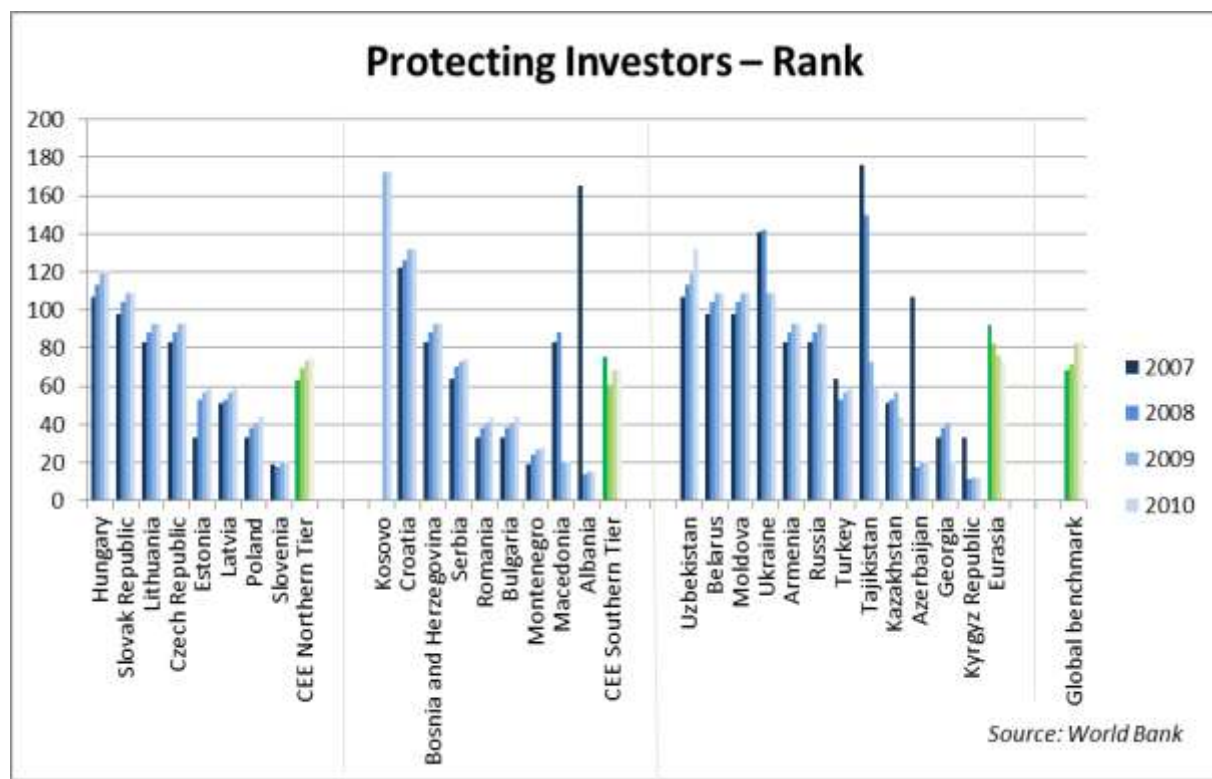
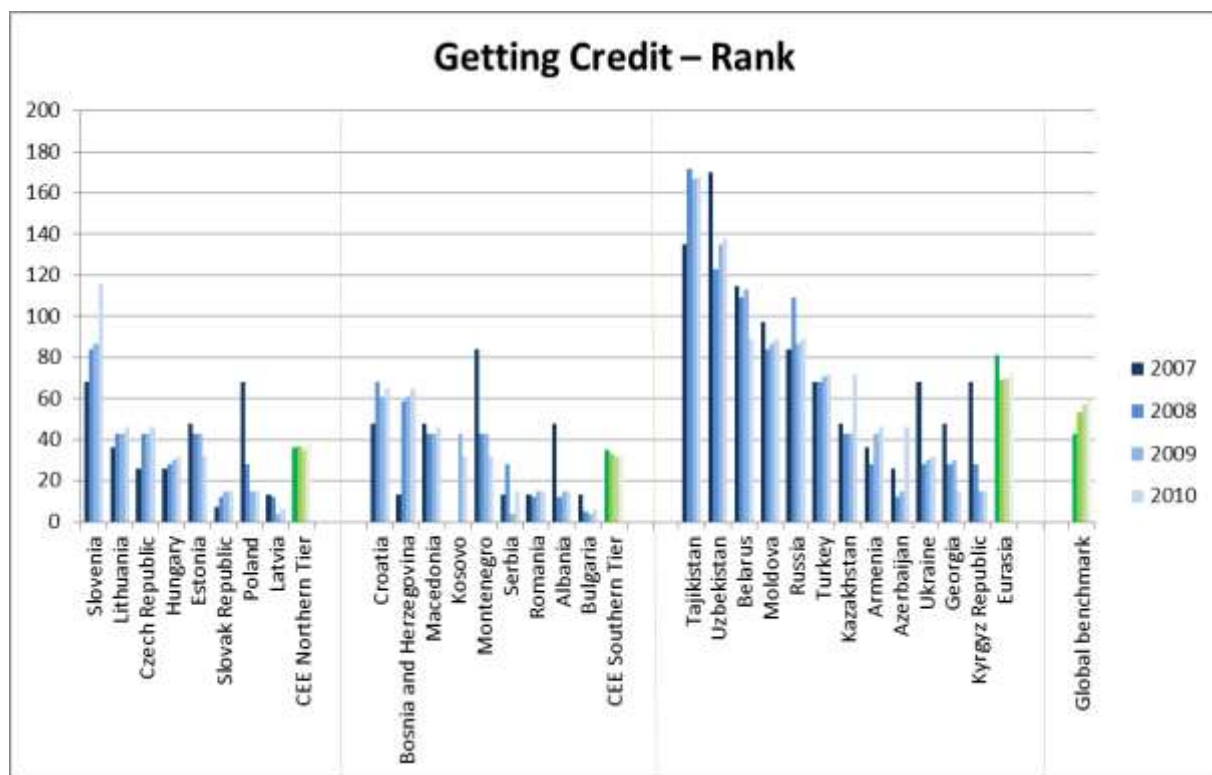


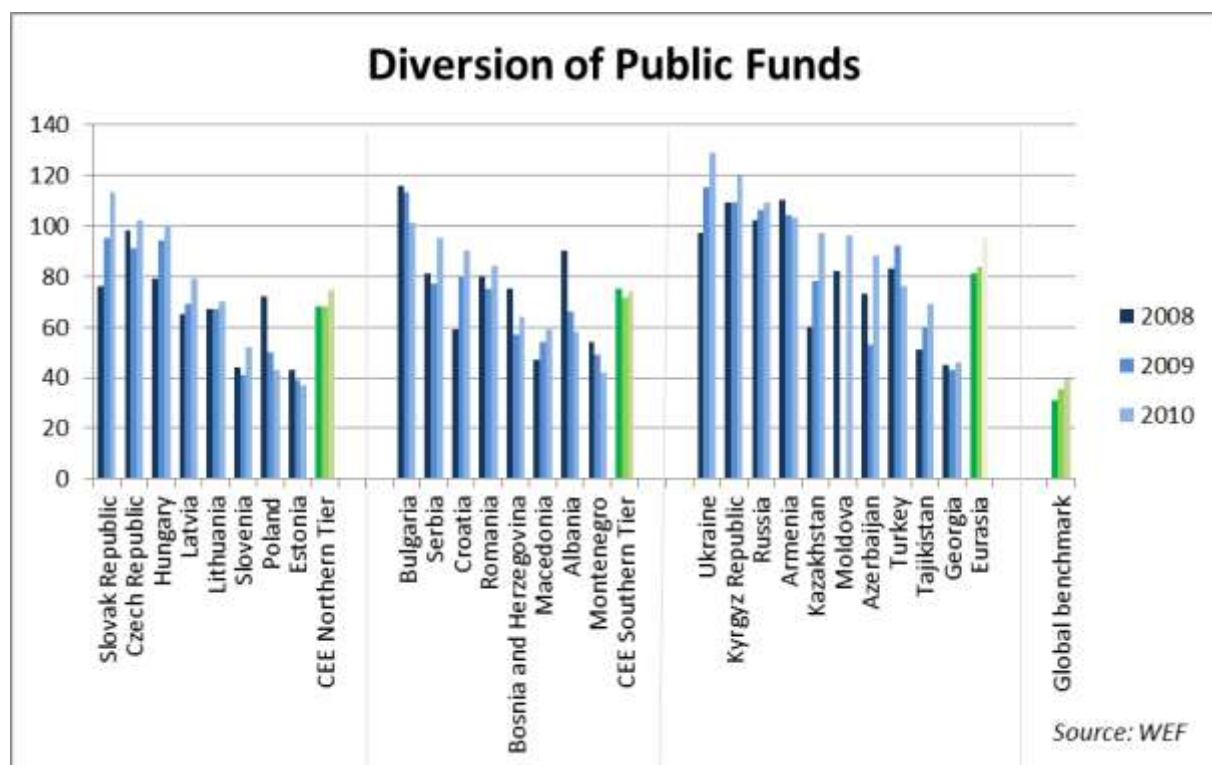
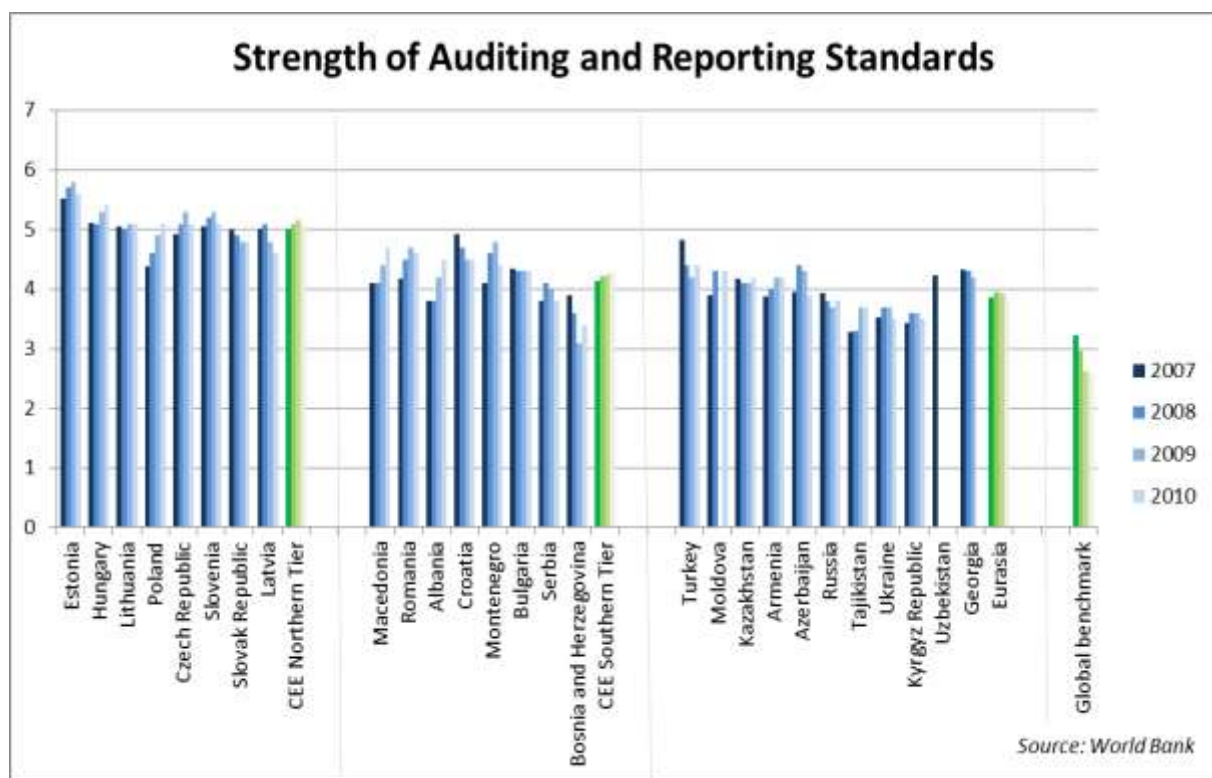


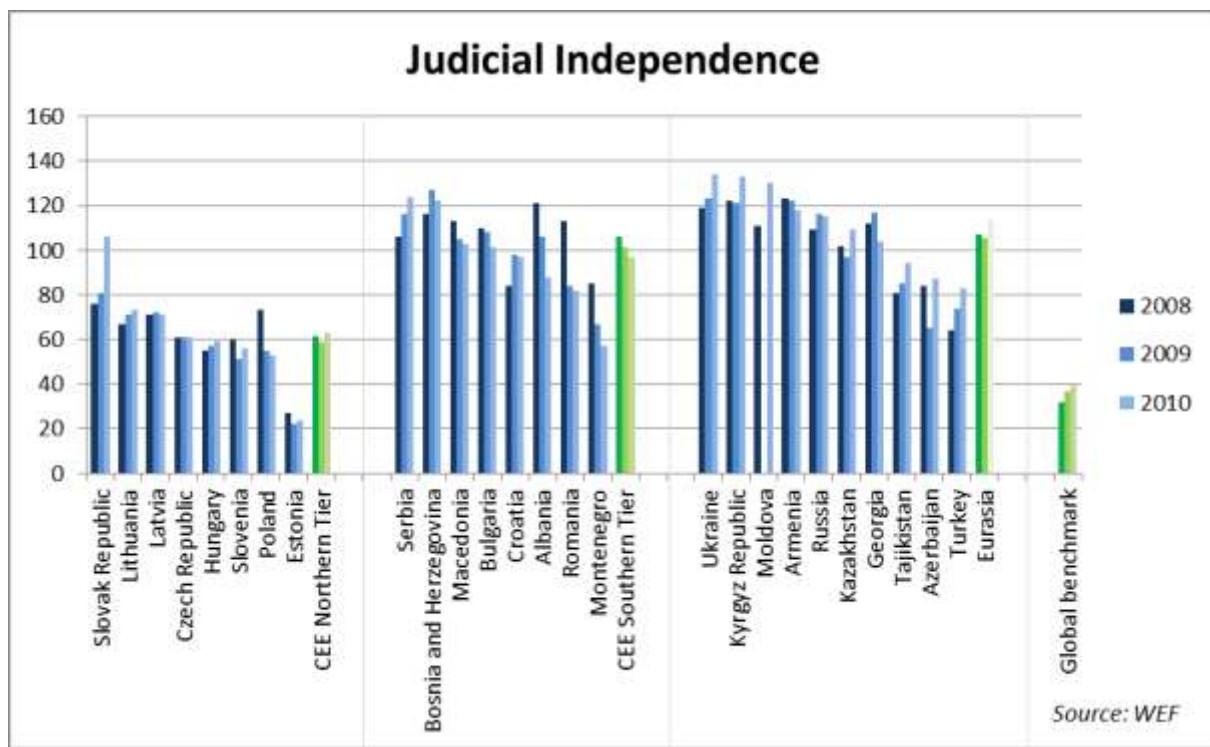
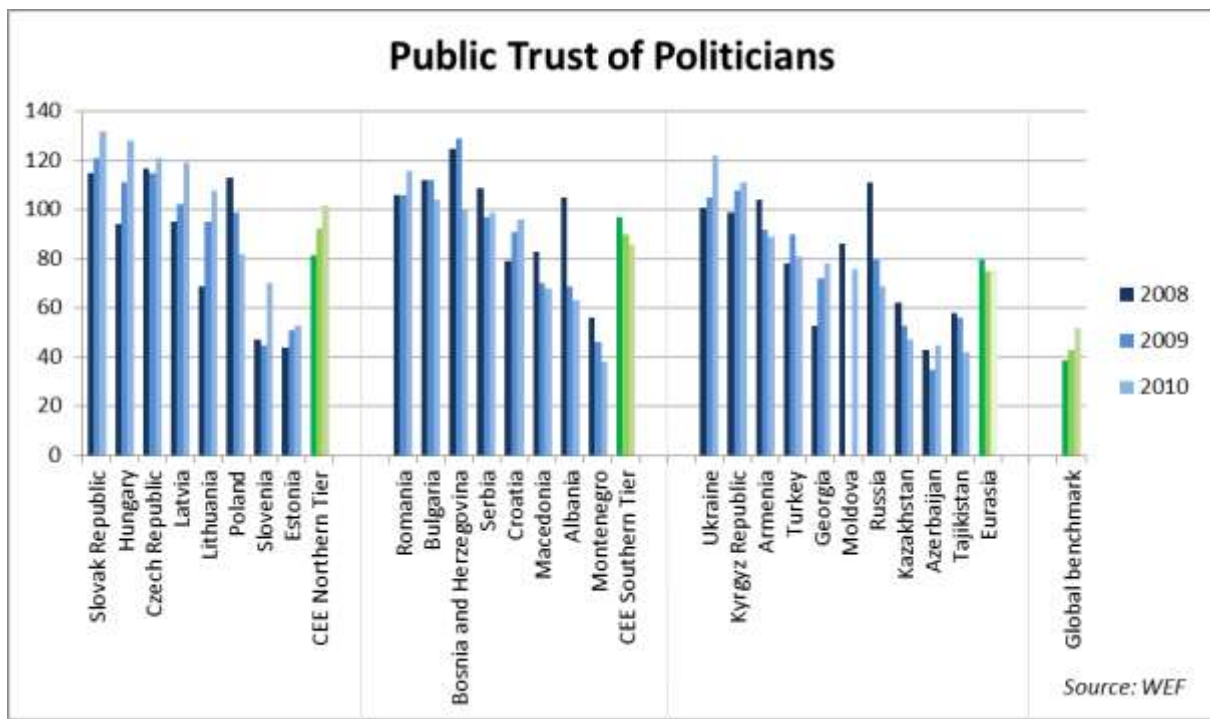




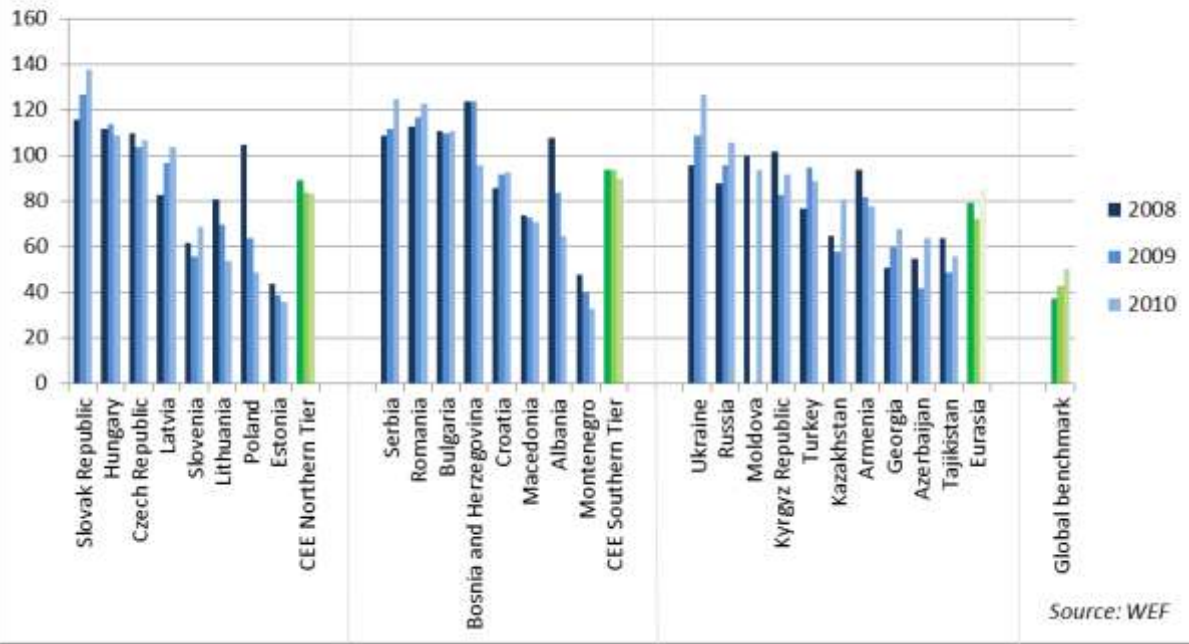
#### 4.1.2. Other Enabling Environment Indicators







## Favoritism in Decisions of Government Officials



## Sources

Doing Business Indicators, World Bank, 2011

Financial Soundness Indicators, [www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org), September 2011

Global Competitiveness Index, World Economic Forum, 2008-10

International Financial Statistics, IMF, 2011

Regional Economic Outlook--Europe, IMF, October 2011

World Insurance Data, Swiss Re, 2011

Partners for Financial Stability (PFS)

1919 N. Lynn Street

Arlington, VA 22209

Phone: +1 571 882 5000

Fax: +1 571 882 5100